THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF CHINA

General editors

DENIS TWITCHETT and JOHN K. FAIRBANK

Volume I

The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 B.C.–A.D. 220

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GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

When *The Cambridge History of China* was first planned, more than a decade ago, it was naturally intended that it should begin with the very earliest periods of Chinese history. However, the production of the series has taken place over a period of years when our knowledge both of Chinese prehistory and of much of the first millennium B.C. has been transformed by the spate of archeological discoveries that began in the 1920s and has been gathering increasing momentum since the early 1970s. This flood of new information has changed our view of early history repeatedly, and there is not yet any generally accepted synthesis of this new evidence and the traditional written record. In spite of repeated efforts to plan and produce a volume or volumes that would summarize the present state of our knowledge of early China, it has so far proved impossible to do so. It may well be another decade before it will prove practical to undertake a synthesis of all these new discoveries that is likely to have some enduring value. Reluctantly, therefore, we begin the coverage of *The Cambridge History of China* with the establishment of the first imperial regimes, those of Ch'in and Han. We are conscious that this leaves a millennium or more of the recorded past to be dealt with elsewhere, and at another time. We are equally conscious of the fact that the events and developments of the first millennium B.C. laid the foundations for the Chinese society and its ideas and institutions that we are about to describe. The institutions, the literary and artistic culture, the social forms, and the systems of ideas and beliefs of Ch'in and Han were firmly rooted in the past, and cannot be understood without some knowledge of this earlier history. As the modern world grows more interconnected, historical understanding of it becomes ever more necessary and the historian's task ever more complex. Fact and theory affect each other even as sources proliferate and knowledge increases. Merely to summarize what is known becomes an awesome task, yet a factual basis of knowledge is increasingly essential for historical thinking.

Since the beginning of the century, the Cambridge histories have set a pattern in the English-reading world for multivolume series containing chapters written by specialists under the guidance of volume editors. *The*

Cambridge Modern History, planned by Lord Acton, appeared in sixte volumes between 1902 and 1912. It was followed by *The Cambridge Ancie History, The Cambridge Medieval History, The Cambridge History of Engli Literature,* and Cambridge histories of India, of Poland, and of the Britis Empire. The original *Modern History* has now been replaced by *The Ne Cambridge Modern History* in twelve volumes, and *The Cambridge Econom History of Europe* is now being completed. Other Cambridge histories re cently undertaken include histories of Islam, Arabic literature, Iran, Juda- ism, Africa, Japan, and Latin America.

In the case of China, Western historians face a special problem. The history of Chinese civilization is more extensive and complex than that of any single Western nation, and only slightly less ramified than the history of European civilization as a whole. The Chinese historical record is immensely detailed and extensive, and Chinese historical scholarship has been highly developed and sophisticated for many centuries. Yet until recent decades the study of China in the West, despite the important pioneer work of European sinologists, had hardly progressed beyond the translation of some few classical historical texts, and the outline history of the major dynasties and their institutions.

Recently Western scholars have drawn more fully upon the rich traditions of historical scholarship in China and also in Japan, and greatly advanced both our detailed knowledge of past events and institutions and also our critical understanding of traditional historiography. In addition, the present generation of Western historians of China can also draw upon the new outlooks and techniques of modern Western historical scholarship, and upon recent developments in the social sciences, while continuing to build upon the solid foundations of rapidly progressing European, Japanese, and Chinese studies. Recent historical events, too, have given prominence to new problems, while throwing into question many older conceptions. Under these multiple impacts the Western revolution in Chinese studies is steadily gathering momentum.

When *The Cambridge History of China* was first planned in 1966, the aim was to provide a substantial account of the history of China as a benchmark for the Western history-reading public: an account of the current state of knowledge in six volumes. Since then the outpouring of current research, the application of new methods, and the extension of scholarship into new fields have further stimulated Chinese historical studies. This growth is indicated by the fact that the history has now become a planned fifteen volumes, but will still leave out such topics as the history of art and of literature, many aspects of economics and technology, and all the riches of local history.

The striking advances in our knowledge of China's past over recent decades will continue and accelerate. Western historians of this great and complex subject are justified in their efforts by the needs of their own peoples for greater and deeper understanding of China. Chinese history belongs to the world not only as a right and necessity, but also as a subject of compelling interest.

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PREFACE TO VOLUME I

IMPERIAL TITLES

In general, emperors are designated by their posthumous titles. These conventional epithets were chosen to give an idealized image of a deceased sovereign. In one instance, that of the Keng-shih emperor, the form specifies the reign title that the sovereign adopted.

TRANSLATION OF OFFICIAL TITLES

The editors have given great thought to the best way of rendering the titles of officials. Most English works on Han history use the terms that were evolved by H. H. Dubs in his pioneer translations from the *Han shu* and that have been conveniently listed together by Dr. de Crespigny.[1] However, these terms are by no means ideal. They neither consistently show the internal hierarchies of the Han civil service, nor do they always indicate the chief duties of an office. Some of the terms are borrowed from European society and carry implications alien to Chinese institutions (for example, such terms as grandee or internuncio); others attempt literal translations of the Chinese titles and are either ungainly or misleading for a Western reader, and occasionally lapse into bathos.

In his recent monograph on Han bureaucracy, which for the first time gives a full account of the Han civil service,[2] Professor Bielenstein retained this terminology as a basis and systematically supplemented the original list with a large number of additional terms. His fully documented monograph sets out in detail the history of the various offices, their relationship to one another, and the incumbents' duties, and is an indispensable aid for the specialist.

This volume, however, is intended for the general reader rather than for the sinologist, and is designed to be self-contained. The prime need is to convey a realistic impression of the working of the imperial governments of

1 Rafe de Crespigny, *Official titles of the Former Han dynasty* (Canberra, 1967).
2 Hans Bielenstein, *The bureaucracy of Han times* (Cambridge, 1980).

Ch'in and Han. The editors have come to the conclusion that many of the expressions used in earlier publications are not suitable for this purpose, and have adopted a different set of equivalents. In doing so, they are well aware that they are aiming at the impossible task of reconciling a number of different, and sometimes conflicting, aims. They have nevertheless felt it essential to attempt the task, in the belief that terms such as imperial counsellor and regional commissioner will be more meaningful to the Western reader than grandee secretary and shepherd. They have endeavored to retain accuracy of translation as far as possible, but also to use English renderings that are immediately meaningful without being unduly clumsy or having inappropriate associations for the reader.

In attempting to achieve consistency, the editors have sometimes been faced with a dilemma. The Chinese titles themselves are by no means systematic, and it is not always possible to retain the same English rendering for one and the same Chinese term while simultaneously indicating identity of grade or relationship. In addition, as the function of some offices changed between Former and Later Han without any alteration of their title, it has sometimes been preferable to employ different expressions for one and the same Chinese term when used in the Former and Later Han periods. On the other hand, in a few instances, an official's title was changed without any alteration in its functions or position in the hierarchy. In such cases, the same English expression is used (both *feng-ch'ang* and *t'ai-ch'ang*, for example, are rendered superintendent of ceremonial; *Ta-nung-ling* and *Ta-ssu-nung* are both rendered superintendent of agriculture).

In particular contexts, such as the chapters on institutions, the romanized Chinese titles have been added in parentheses after the English equivalent; and in a few cases, where it has proved impossible to coin a suitable English rendering, a literal translation has been retained. These terms appear in the glossary-index and in an alphabetical list that includes both the renderings that are used here and those to be found in previous studies of Han history.

TECHNICAL TERMINOLOGY

In view of the preferences expressed by some of the contributors, the editors have not insisted on complete consistency in the use of certain terms. Thus, some authors choose to render the term *wu-hsing* as Five Elements, others as Five Phases. It has been thought right to leave those terms as they stand, so that each contributor may use an expression that he or she believes gives a more accurate idea of the original concept.

DATES

Dates are rendered conventionally, according to the corresponding date of the Western calendar,[3] as if that had been introduced at the time. In some instances it has been possible and desirable to give these precisely, in terms of the day; more usually, and particularly for Former Han, the primary sources simply record the month. As the calendar used in Ch'in and Han was luni-solar, there is no exact correspondence between the months of the Chinese year and those of a Western solar calendar. Nor do the Chinese and Western years exactly correspond. This is further complicated by changes that were introduced to mark the point when the Chinese year started. Thus, until 105 B.C., the tenth lunar month was taken as the beginning of the calendar year; thereafter (except from A.D. 9 to 23), the first month (*cheng yüeh*) was designated for this purpose. As a result, readers should be aware that, for the first century of Former Han, curious anomalies may appear at first sight; for example, events in the months numbered 1 to 9 of a given year actually follow those recorded for the months numbered 10 to 12.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

In general, measurements are given in the metric equivalents for Chinese units, but these have been retained in contexts where they are meaningful (for example, in Chapter 10). For references to archeological finds, measurements are given in the metric form in which they appear in the reports. A separate list of Han weights and measures and their metric equivalents appears on p. xxxviii.

MAPS

The maps for this volume (with the exception of maps 10 and 11 published previously by Professor Bielenstein) have been prepared on the basis of the historical reconstructions in the most up-to-date historical atlas of China, the *Chung-kuo li-shih ti-t'u-chi*, Vol. II (Shanghai, 1975). These maps reconstruct the coastline and drainage networks of Ch'in and Han times, and show the administrative centers listed in the geographical monographs of *Han shu* and *Hou-Han shu*, giving the provincial administration as it existed in A.D. 2 and A.D. 140, respectively. The administrative boundaries shown

3 For complete tables of conversion, readers are referred to works such as P. Hoang, *Concordance des chronologies néoméniques chinoise et européene* (Shanghai, 1910); Ch'en Yüan, *Erh-shih shih shuo-jun piao* (1925; rpt. Peking, 1956); and Tung Tso-pin, *Chronological tables of Chinese history* (Hong Kong, 1960).

in these maps are approximations, but it is unlikely that it will ever be possible to reconstruct them more accurately. The atlas, however, shows external boundaries for Han territory that are certainly exaggerated, and we adopt what seem to be more realistic limits. It should, however, be remembered that there were no external frontiers in the modern sense, and the boundaries shown are merely an approximation of the limits of Han territorial authority. We also follow the lines of the Great Wall in Ch'in and Former Han as shown in the same atlas, although there have been a number of alternative reconstructions. An accurate reconstruction awaits detailed archeological investigations that have yet to be undertaken.

PLACE NAMES

Ch'in and Han period place names are given in Wade-Giles romanization, with hyphens between syllables (example, Ho-nan). Modern place names are given without hyphens, and employ the generally accepted Post Office spelling for certain provinces and well-known cities (such as Honan, Szechwan, Peking).

REFERENCES TO SOURCES

The notes to this volume are intended to ensure that, where appropriate, a reader's attention is directed to a primary source; and wherever possible, references to Western translations of that source are appended. In addition, the notes cite the principal secondary studies of the topic under discussion. The notes also refer readers to other parts of this volume that are of relevance to the subject under discussion.

In citing the primary sources, the editors have been guided by the following principle. While they have not included a reference for every fact or event that is mentioned, they have endeavored to do so for the more important developments with sufficient frequency to enable readers to follow the accounts of an event in the Standard Histories.

For the first century of Former Han, the two Standard Histories frequently include text that is identical, or nearly identical. While references are not given throughout to both the *Shih-chi* and the *Han shu,* sufficient information is provided to enable readers to refer to each of these works. If a translation of a particular chapter has been published, the editors have chosen to cite from the source that is available in this form (for example, references are in general given to *Han shu* chapter 24, and Swann's translation, rather than to *Shih-chi* chapter 30). In addition, preference has sometimes been given to the *Han shu* for two reasons. First, the arrangement

and finish of the chapter of the *Han shu* is sometimes more complete and clear than that of its parallel in the *Shih-chi* (for example, *Han shu* chapters 61 and 96 compare favorably with *Shih-chi* chapter 123). Second, as the account of the *Shih-chi* closes shortly after 100 B.C., it has seemed desirable to concentrate on the *Han shu,* so that a subject which extends over the whole of Former Han may be studied from one and the same source (such as the genealogical tables in *Han shu* chapters 13 to 19).

References to the Standard Histories are to the punctuated editions recently published by the *Chung-hua shu-chü,* Peking. While the editors are well aware that more fully annotated editions are often to be preferred, in view of the extra information that these provide, they believe that it is of greater service to readers to refer to these punctuated editions, as it is comparatively easy for those who wish to do so to proceed therefrom to such critical editions as those of Takigawa Kametarō or Wang Hsien-ch'ien. Chapter numbers of the *Hou-Han shu* are those of both the punctuated edition and of Wang Hsien-ch'ien's *Hou-Han shu chi-chieh.* The chapter numbers of the treatises of *Hsü Han chih* are distinguished by the inclusion of the note "(tr.)."

In addition to the monographic studies of certain aspects of Ch'in and Han history, there are a great number of scholarly articles dealing with various aspects of Ch'in and Han history. Because a full-scale bibliography setting out all such works would be excessively cumbersome, the list of books and articles in the bibliography to this volume is confined to items cited in the notes to the chapters.

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D. C. T.
M. L.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the notes and the list of books and articles quoted. For convenience, where possible references to primary sources are given to modern editions that are readily available; for full details and for abbreviations of titles of secondary writings, see the entries in the bibliography.

AM	*Asia Major* (new series)
Annuaire	*Annuaire du Collège de France*
BEFEO	*Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême Orient*
BMFEA	*Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
CASS	*Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*
CFL	*Ch'ien-fu lun* (P'eng Tuo: *Ch'ien-fu lun chien*, Peking, 1979)
CHHW	*Ch'üan Hou Han wen* (in Yen K'o-chün: *Ch'üan shang-ku san-tai Ch'in Han San-kuo liu-ch'ao wen*)
CICA	*China in central Asia* (see Hulsewé)
CPAM	Commission for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments
CS	*Chin shu* (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1974)
CYYY	*Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Taipei*
HFHD	*History of the Former Han Dynasty* (see Dubs)
HHC	*Hou-Han chi* (references are to *SPTK* and the punctuated reprint, Taipei, 1976)
HHS	*Hou-Han shu, Hsü Han shu* (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1965)
HHSCC	*Hou-Han shu chi-chieh* (Wang Hsien-ch'ien; Ch'ang-sha, 1915)
HJAS	*Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*
HNT	*Huai-nan-tzu* (Liu Wen-tien: *Huai-nan hung-lieh chi-chieh*, Shanghai, 1926)
HS	*Han shu* (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1962)
HSPC	*Han shu pu-chu* (Wang Hsien-ch'ien; Ch'ang-sha, 1900)

JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JAS	*Journal of Asian Studies*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
KK	*Kaogu* (formerly *K'ao-ku t'ung-hsün*)
KKHP	*Kaogu xuebao* (*K'ao-ku hsüeh-pao*)
LH	*Lun-heng* (Huang Hui: *Lun-heng chiao-shih*, Ch'ang-sha, 1938)
LSYC	*Li-shih yen-chiu*
Mélanges	*Mélanges publiés par l'Institut des Hautes Études chinoises*
MH	*Mémoires historiques* (see Chavannes)
MN	*Monumenta Nipponica*
MS	*Monumenta Serica*
SC	*Shih-chi* (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1959)
SCC	*Science and civilisation in China* (see Needham)
SKC	*San-kuo chih* (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1959)
SKCCC	*San-kuo chih chi-chieh* (Lu Pi: reprinted Peking, Ku-chi ch'u-pan-she, 1957)
SPPY	*Ssu-pu-pei-yao*
SPTK	*Ssu-pu-ts'ung-k'an*
TCTC	*Tzu-chih t'ung-chien*
TP	*T'oung Pao*
TSK	*Tōyō shi kenkyū*
WW	*Wenwu* (formerly *Wen-wu ts'an-k'ao tzu-liao*)
YTL	*Yen-t'ieh lun* (Wang Li-ch'i: *Yen-t'ieh lun chiao-chu*, Shanghai, 1958)

OFFICIAL TITLES AND INSTITUTIONAL TERMS

The entries in the following list are limited to terms that appear in this volume. The Chinese expressions are preceded by the equivalents that have been adopted here, and they are followed by the equivalents that are used in other publications. For a complete list of official titles, see Hans Bielenstein, *The bureaucracy of Han times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 207f.; and Rafe de Crespigny, *Official titles of the Former Han Dynasty* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1967).

Abundant talent *mao-ts'ai* Abundant talent

Academician *po-shih* Erudit

Academician (libations) *po-shih chi-chiu* Libationer of the erudits

Academy *t'ai hsüeh* Academy

Advisory counsellors *chien-i ta-fu* Grandee remonstrant and consultant

Agricultural garrison *t'un-t'ien* Agricultural garrison

Aide-de-camp *ts'ung-shih* Assistant

Arsenal *wu-k'u* Arsenal

Artisans of the eastern garden *tung-yüan chiang* Artisans of the eastern garden

Assistant *ch'eng* Assistant

Assistant clerk *tso shih* Accessory clerk

Assistant to the imperial counsellor (Former Han) *yü-shih chung-ch'eng, chung-ch'eng* Palace assistant secretary

Assistant of the left *tso-ch'eng* Assistant of the left

Assistant to the minister of works (Later Han) *yü-shih chung-ch'eng, chung-ch'eng* Palace assistant secretary

Assistant of the right *yu-ch'eng* Assistant of the right

Assistant, stables for thoroughbreds *lu-chi-chiu ch'eng* Assistant of the stables for thoroughbreds

Attendant clerk *ts'ung-shih shih* Attendant clerk

Attendant secretary *shih-yü-shih* Attending secretary

Bright hall *ming-t'ang* Bright hall

Bureau of banditry *tsei ts'ao* Bureau for murderous activities

Bureau for the civil population *min ts'ao* Bureau of the common people

Bureau clerk *ts'ao-shih*

Bureau of merit *kung ts'ao* Bureau of merit

Bureau of orchards and gardens *pu-i shu*

Bureau for regular attendants *ch'ang-shih ts'ao* Bureau for regular attendants

Bureau for senior officials *erh-ch'ien-shih ts'ao* Bureau of officials ranking 2,000 *shih*

Bureau for superintending guests of the south, north *nan, pei chu-k'o ts'ao* Southern, northern bureau in charge of guests

Cadet *shu-tzu* Cadet

Cadets (heir apparent) *t'ai-tzu shu-tzu* Cadets of the heir apparent

Captain *hou* Captain

Captain *chün hou* Captain

Captain of the capital (left) *tso tu hou* Captain of the capital at the left

Captain of the capital (right) *yu tu hou* Captain of the capital of the right

Captain of the center, northern army *pei-chün chung-hou* Captain of the center, northern army

Cavalry *chi-shih* Cavalrymen

Chancellor *ch'eng-hsiang* Chancellor

Chancellor (of kingdoms) *hsiang* Chancellor (of kingdoms)

Chancellor's assistant (legal matters) *ssu-chih* Director of uprightness, inspector of straightness

Chancellor of state *hsiang kuo* Chancellor of state

Chief clerk *chang-shih* Chief clerk

Chief of commune *t'ing-chang* Chief of commune

Chief of the guards *wei-shih chang* Chief of the guards

Chief, Long Lanes (Yung-hsiang) *Yung-hsiang chang* Chief of the Long Lanes

Chief of markets, Lo-yang *Lo-yang shih-chang* Chief of the markets of Lo-yang

Chief of medicines for the empress *chung-kung yao chang* Chief of medicines of the empress

Chief officer of the Western Regions *hsi-yü chang-shih* Chief clerk of the Western Regions

Chief physician *i-kung chang* Chief of the physicians

Chief of police *yu-chiao* Patrol leader

Chief of ritual music *li-yüeh chang* Chief of ritual music

Chief of sacrifices *tz'u-ssu chang* Chief invocator

Chief of stables (heir apparent) *t'ai-tzu chiu chang* Chief of the stables of the heir apparent

Civil official (all-purpose) *wu-kuan yüan* Officer of the five bureaus

Clan *ta-hsing*

Clerk *shu-tso* Scribe

Colonel *hsiao-wei* Colonel

Colonel, agricultural garrisons *t'un-t'ien hsiao-wei* Colonel for agricultural garrisons

Colonel of archers who shoot by sound *she-sheng hsiao-wei* Colonel of archers who shoot by sound

Colonel, Ch'ang River encampment *Ch'ang-shui hsiao-wei* Colonel of the Ch'ang river encampment

Colonel, city gates *ch'eng-men hsiao-wei* Colonel of the city gates

Colonel, garrison cavalry *t'un-chi hsiao-wei* Colonel of garrison cavalry

Colonel, infantry *pu-ping hsiao-wei* Colonel of footsoldiers

Colonel, internal security *ssu-li hsiao-wei* Colonel director of the retainers

Colonel, picked cavalry *yüeh-chi hsiao-wei* Colonel of picked cavalry

Colonel-protector of the Ch'iang *hu Ch'iang hsiao-wei* Colonel protecting the Tibetans

Colonel-protector of the Wu-huan *hu Wu-huan hsiao-wei* Colonel protecting the Wu-huan

Commandant *tu-wei* Chief commandant

Commandant *wei* Commandant

Commandant of attached cavalry *fu-ma tu-wei* Chief commandant of attached cavalry

Commandant of cavalry *chi tu-wei* Chief commandant of cavalry

Commandant in charge of crops *i-ho tu-wei*

Commandant in charge of slaves *t'ung-pu tu-wei*

Commandant of the dependent states *shu-kuo tu-wei* Chief commandant of a dependent state

Commandant of imperial carriages *feng-chü tu-wei* Chief commandant of imperial equipages

Commandant of the passes *kuan tu-wei* Chief commandant of the passes

Commandery *chün* Commandery

Commune *t'ing* Commune

Company *ch'ü* Company

Controller *cheng* Director

Controller, Ch'ang-ch'iu palace *ta ch'ang-ch'iu* Grand prolonger of autumn

Copper office *t'ung kuan* Office of copper

Counsellor in attendance *chung-san ta-fu* Attendant grandee

Counsellor (heir apparent's household) *t'ai-tzu-men ta-fu* Grandees at the gate of the heir apparent

Counsellor of the palace *kuang-lu ta-fu* Imperial household grandee

County *hsien* Prefecture

County magistrate *hsien chang* Chief

County magistrate *hsien ling* Prefect

Court architect *chiang-tso ta-chiang* Court architect

Cultured gentlemen *shih*

Dependent state *shu-kuo* Dependent state

Director *ling* Prefect

Director, arsenal *wu-k'u ling* Prefect of the arsenal

Director, arts and crafts *shang-fang ling* Prefect of the masters of techniques

Director of astrology *t'ai-shih ling* Prefect grand astrologer

Director of butchery *t'ai-tsai ling* Prefect grand butcher

Director, catering *t'ai-kuan ling* Prefect grand provisioner

Director of catering, heir apparent *t'ai-tzu ssu-kuan ling* Prefect of the office for food of the heir apparent

Director of the *ch'eng-hua* (Continuing Flowers) stables *ch'eng-hua chiu ling* Prefect of the stables of Continuing Flowers

Director of coachhouses *chü-fu ling* Prefect of the coachhouses for imperial equipages

Director of the emergency cohort *lü-pen ling* Prefect of the emergency cohort

Director, empress's messengers *chung-kung yeh-che ling* Prefect of the internuncios of the empress

Director, empress's private treasury *chung-kung ssu-fu ling* Prefect of the private treasury of the empress

Director, empress's transport *chung-kung p'u* Coachman of the empress

Director, enclosure of the left *tso-hsiao ling* Prefect of the enclosure of the left

Director, enclosure of the right *yu-hsiao ling* Prefect of the enclosure of the right

Director of grain selection *tao-kuan ling* Prefect of the office for the selection of grain

Director of the great granary *t'ai-ts'ang ling* Prefect of the great granary

Director, heir apparent's granary *t'ai-tzu ts'ang ling* Prefect of the granary of the heir apparent

Director, heir apparent's household *t'ai-tzu chia ling* Prefect of the household of the heir apparent

Director, Hung-te (Vast Virtue) Park *Hung-te yüan ling* Prefect of the Park of Vast Virtue

Director, imperial harem *i-t'ing ling* Prefect of the lateral courts

Director, imperial palace gardens *kou-shun ling* Prefect intendant of the imperial palace gardens

Director, imperial wardrobe *yü-fu ling* Prefect of the imperial wardrobe

Director, insignia and credentials *fu-chieh ling* Prefect of insignia and credentials

Director of majors (official carriages) *kung-chü ssu-ma ling* Prefect of the majors in charge of official carriages

Director of manufactures *k'ao-kung ling* Prefect of the complete workman office

Director, medical care *t'ai-i ling* Prefect grand physician

Director of the memorial park *yüan ling* Prefect of the funerary park

Director of music *t'ai-yüeh ling* Prefect grand musician

Director of music (Yü) *t'ai-yü-yüeh ling* Prefect grand Yü musician

Director of offerings *ssu-kuan ling* Prefect of the office of offerings, prefect of the office of food

Director of the palace gentlemen *lang-chung ling* Prefect of the gentlemen of the palace

Director, palace storehouses *chung tsang-fu ling* Prefect of the palace storehouse

Director of prayer *t'ai-chu ling* Prefect grand supplicator

Director of price stabilization *p'ing-chun ling* Prefect of the bureau of equalization and standards

Director of records for the empress *chung-kung shu-ling* Prefect recorder of the empress

Director, sacrifices *tz'u-ssu ling* Prefect invocator

Director of the secretariat *shang-shu ling* Prefect of the masters of writing

Director, Shang-lin (Supreme Forest) Park *Shang-lin yüan ling* Prefect of the Park of the Supreme Forest

Director of the shrine of Kao-ti *Kao-miao ling* Prefect of the temple of the Eminent Founder

Director of the shrine of Kuang-wu-ti *Shih-tsu miao ling* Prefect of the Temple of the Epochal Founder

Director, stables for fine horses, left, right *tso, yu chün chiu ling* Prefect of the stables for fine horses of the left, right

Director, stationery *shou-kung ling* Prefect of the palace stationery

Director of supply (sacrifices) *lin-hsi ling* Prefect of the office for sacrificial oblations

Director, thoroughbred stables *lu-chi chiu ling* Director, stables for thoroughbreds

Director of transport (heir apparent) *t'ai-tzu p'u* Coachman of the heir apparent

Director, valets *nei-che ling* Prefect of the valets

Director of the watch (heir apparent) *t'ai-tzu shuai-keng ling* Prefect stationer of the watches of the heir apparent

Director of the Wei-yang (Eternal) Stables *wei-yang-chiu ling* Prefect of the Eternal Stables

Director Yellow Gates (head eunuch) *huang-men ling* Prefect of the Yellow Gates

Director, Yung-hsiang (Long Lanes) *yung-hsiang ling* Prefect of the Long Lanes

Director, Yung-hsiang (Long Lanes) of the empress *chung-kung yung-hsiang ling* Prefect of the Long Lanes of the empress

District *hsiang* District

Division *ying* Division

Duchy *kung-kuo* Duchy

Duke *kung* Duke

Duke giving tranquility to the Han *An Han kung* Duke giving tranquility to the Han

Duty attendant clerk *pieh-chia ts'ung-shih* [*-shih*] Aide-de-camp attendant [clerk]

Duty officer *wei* Commandant

Eastern palace *tung-kung* Eastern palace

Elder *san-lao* Thrice venerable

Encampment *ying* Encampment

Ever full granary *ch'ang-man ts'ang* Ever full granary

Ever level granary *ch'ang-p'ing ts'ang* Ever level granary

Family soldiers *chia-ping*

Filially pious and incorrupt *hsiao-lien* Filially pious and incorrupt

Flourishing talent *hsiu-ts'ai* Flourishing talent

Garments office *fu kuan* Office of garments

Garrison conscripts *shu-tsu* Garrison conscripts

General *chiang-chün* General

General of agile cavalry *p'iao-chi chiang-chün* General of agile cavalry

General of the army *shang chiang-chün*

General who calms the waves *fu-pu chiang-chün*

General of chariots and cavalry *chü-chi chiang-chün* General of chariots and cavalry

General-in-chief *ta-chiang-chün* General-in-chief, regent

General of the left *tso chiang-chün* General of the left

General of the rear *hou chiang-chün* General of the rear

General of the van *ch'ien chiang-chün* General of the van

Gentlemen in attendance *shih-lang* Gentlemen in attendance

Gentlemen in attendance of the Yellow Gates *huang-men shih-lang* Gentlemen in attendance of the Yellow Gates

Gentleman consultant *i-lang* Gentleman consultant

Gentleman of the palace *lang-chung* Gentleman of the palace

Gentlemen of the secretariat *shang-shu lang* Gentlemen of the masters of writing

Gentlemen of the Yellow Gates *huang-men lang* Gentlemen of the Yellow Gates

Gold office *chin kuan* Office of gold

Governor *shou, t'ai-shou* (grand) administrator

Governor of the capital *ching-chao yin* Governor of the capital

Governor of Ho-nan *Ho-nan yin* Governor of Ho-nan

Grain intendant *sou-su tu-wei* Chief commandant who searches for grain

Grand physician *t'ai i* Grand physician

Grand tutor *t'ai-fu* Grand tutor, senior duke

Great proscription *tang ku* Great proscription

Guards *wei-shih* Guards

Hall of ten thousand gold pieces *wan-chin t'ang* Hall of ten thousand gold pieces

Hamlet *li* Hamlet, village, ward

Headman of the hamlet *li-k'uei* Headman of the hamlet

Heir apparent *t'ai-tzu* Heir apparent

Household assistant *chia-ch'eng* Assistant of the household

Imperial counsellor *yü-shih ta-fu* Grandee secretary, imperial clerk grandee

Imperial harem *i-t'ing* Lateral courts

Imperial harem prison *i-t'ing yü* Prison of the lateral courts

Imperial inspector *chien yü-shih* Inspecting secretary

Imperial messenger *yeh-che* Internuncio

Infantry *ts'ai-kuan* Skilled soldiers

Inspector *chien* Inspector

Inspector of the imperial library *pi-shu chien* Inspector of the imperial library

Inspector of the left, right *tso-chien, yu-chien* Inspector of the left, right

Intendant of the secretariat *lu shang-shu shih* Intendant of the masters of writing

Investigator *tu-yu* Supervisor

Iron agency *t'ieh kuan* Office of iron

Junior attendant, Yellow Gates *hsiao huang-men* Junior attendant of the Yellow Gates

Junior tutor of the heir apparent *t'ai-tzu shao-fu* Junior tutor of the heir apparent

King *wang* Prince

Kingdom *kuo, wang-kuo* Principality

Kinship group *tsung*

Leader of the gentlemen of the palace (all-purpose) *wu-kuan chung-lang chiang* General of the gentlemen of the household for all purposes

Leader of the gentlemen of the palace in charge of the Hsiung-nu *Shih Hsiung-nu chung-lang chiang* General of the gentlemen of the household in charge of the Hsiung-nu

Leader of the gentlemen of the palace (*hu-pen:* rapid as tigers) *hu-pen chung-lang chiang* General of the gentlemen of the household rapid as tigers

Leader of the gentlemen of the palace (left) *tso chung-lang chiang* General of the gentlemen of the household of the left

Leader of the gentlemen of the palace with responsibility for the protection of the Hsiung-nu *Hu Hsiung-nu chung-lang chiang* General of the gentlemen of the household protecting the Hsiung-nu

Leader of the gentlemen of the palace (right) *yu chung-lang chiang* General of the gentlemen of the household of the right

Leader of the gentlemen of the palace (*yü-lin:* of the feathered forest) *yü-lin chung-lang chiang* General of the gentlemen of the household of the feathered forest

Leader of the guards (heir apparent) *t'ai-tzu wei shuai* Leader of the guard of the heir apparent

Lesser marquisate *kuan-nei hou*

Lieutenant colonel *fu hsiao-wei* Lieutenant colonel

Magistrate *hsien chang* Chief

Magistrate *hsien ling* Prefect

Magnates *hao-yu*

Major *ssu-ma* Major

Marches *tao* Marches

Market chief *shih chang* Chief of a market

Marquisate, marquis *hou, ch'e-hou, lieh-hou* Nobility, noble

Marquises admitted to court *ch'ao-t'ing hou* Marquises admitted to court

Marquises attending at sacrifices *shih-tz'u hou* Marquises attending at sacrifices

Marquises of the imperial house *wang-tzu hou* Marquises of the imperial house

Marshal of state *ta-ssu-ma* Commander-in-chief

Master of harmonies *hsieh-lü tu-wei* Chief commandant of harmony

Master of the left, right for filially pious and incorrupt *hsiao-lien tso-wei, yu-wei* Commandant of the right for filially pious and incorrupt

Master of records *chu-pu* Master of records

Mayor of Lo-yang *Lo-yang ling* Prefect of Lo-yang

Member of the heir apparent's suite *t'ai-tzu she-jen* Member of the suite of the heir apparent

Meritorious subjects *kung-ch'en* Meritorious subjects

Metropolitan superintendent *nei shih* Clerk of the capital

Metropolitan superintendent of the left *tso nei-shih, tso p'ing-i* Eastern supporter

Metropolitan superintendent of the right *yu nei-shih, yu-fu-feng* Western supporter

Minister of finance *ta-ssu-t'u, ssu-t'u* Grand minister over the masses, minister over the masses, second duke

Minister of works *ta-ssu-k'ung, ssu-k'ung* Grand minister of works, minister of works, third duke

Moderator of the left, right *tso-p'ing, yu-p'ing* Referee of the left, right

Nine ministers *chiu ch'ing* Nine ministers

Northern army *pei-chün* Northern army

Office of interpreters *i-kuan* Office of interpreters

Office of music *yüeh-fu* Bureau of music

Office of palace writers *chung shu* Office of palace writers

Office for transport coordination *chün-shu kuan*

Orders of honor *chüeh* Orders of aristocratic rank

Outrider (heir apparent) *t'ai-tzu hsien-ma* Forerunner of the heir apparent

Overseer *se-fu* Bailiff

Palace attendant *shih chung* Palace attendant

Palace cadets (heir apparent) *t'ai-tzu chung shu-tzu* Palace cadets of the heir apparent

Palace director, standards *chung-chun ling* Palace prefect of standards

Palace maid *kung jen* Palace maid

Palace patroller (heir apparent) *t'ai-tzu chung-yün* Palace patroller of the heir apparent

Palace of Perpetual Joy *Yung-lo kung* Palace of Perpetual Joy

Palace of Prolonged Autumn *Ch'ang-ch'iu kung* Palace of Prolonged Autumn

Palace of Prolonged Joy *Ch'ang-lo kung* Palace of Prolonged Joy

Palace writers *chung-shu* Palace writers

Park of Extending Achievement *Kuang-ch'eng yüan* Park of Extending Achievement

Petty official with rank *yu-chih* Petty official with rank

Platoon *t'un* Platoon

Platoon commander *t'un-chang* Platoon chief

Postal station *yu-t'ing* Postal station

Prison hospital *pu shih* Drying house

Private guests *ssu-k'o*

Protector general *tu-hu* Protector general

Protector general of the Western Regions *hsi-yü tu-hu* Protector of the Western Regions

Protectorate *pao*

Province *sheng*

Provincial lodges *chün-ti* Commandery lodges

Regent *ta chiang-chün* Regent

Regiment *pu* Regiment

Region *chou* Province

Regional commissioner *mu, chou mu* Shepherd

Regional inspector *tz'u-shih, pu tz'u-shih* Inspector, inspector of a circuit

Regular palace attendant *chung-ch'ang-shih* Regular palace attendant

Relatives of imperial consorts *wai-ch'i* Imperial distaff relatives

Religious rebellion *yao-tsei* Religious rebellion

Retainers *pu-ch'ü*

Royal counsellor (for kingdoms) *yü-shih ta-fu* Grandee secretary

Salt agency *yen kuan* Office of salt

School at the gate of the vast capital *hung-tu men hsüeh* School at the gate of the vast capital

Seamen in towered warships *lou-ch'uan-shih* Sailors in towered warships

Secretariat *shang-shu* Masters of writing

Secretaries of the empress *chung-kung shang-shu* Masters of writing of the empress

Senior counsellor of the palace *t'ai-chung ta-fu* Grand palace grandee

Senior tutor of the heir apparent *t'ai-tzu t'ai-fu* Grand tutor of the heir apparent

Serving at the spring and autumn courts *feng-ch'ao ch'ing* Serving at the spring and autumn courts

Settlement *lo*

Shipyard *lou-ch'uan kuan* Office of towered warships

Specially advanced *t'e-chin* Specially advanced

Spiritual terrace *ling-t'ai* Spiritual terrace

Staff of authority *chieh* Staff of authority

Student *men-sheng*

Superintendent of agriculture *ta-ssu-nung, ta-nung ling* Grand minister of agriculture

Superintendent of the capital *chih chin-wu* Bearer of the gilded mace

Superintendent of ceremonial *t'ai-ch'ang, feng-ch'ang* Grand master of ceremonies

Superintendent of the guards *wei-wei* Commandant of the guards, commandant of the palace guards

Superintendent of the imperial clan *tsung-cheng* Superintendent of the imperial house

Superintendent of the imperial clan *tsung-cheng* Director of the imperial clan

Superintendent of the lesser treasury *shao-fu* Privy treasurer

Superintendent of the palace *kuang-lu-hsün* Superintendent of the imperial household

Superintendent of state visits *ta-hsing ling* Prefect grand usher

Superintendent of state visits *ta-hung-lu* Grand herald

Superintendent of state visits *tien-k'o* Director of guests

Superintendent of transport *t'ai-p'u* Grand coachman

Superintendent of trials *t'ing-wei* Commandant of justice

Superintendent of waterways and parks *shui-heng tu-wei* Chief commandant of waters and parks

Supervisor of the empress's household *ta ch'ang-ch'iu* Grand prolonger of autumn

Supervisor of extra attendants (Yellow Gates) *chung huang-men jung-ts'ung p'u-yeh, chung-kung huang-men jung-ts'ung p'u-yeh* Supervisor of the extra retinue of attendants within the Yellow Gates

Supervisor of the household *chan-shih* Supervisor of the household

Supervisor of the imperial messengers *yeh-che p'u-yeh* Supervisor of the internuncios

Supervisor, imperial messengers of the palace *chung yeh-che p'u-yeh* Supervisor of the palace internuncios

Supervisor of the secretariat *shang-shu p'u-yeh* Supervisor of the masters of writing

Supreme commander *t'ai-wei* Grand commandant, first duke

Supreme general *wu shang chiang-chün* Supreme general

Terrace Bathed by Water *Chien t'ai* Terrace Bathed by Water

Three corps *san-shu* Three corps

Three excellencies (Later Han) *san kung* Three excellencies

Three metropolitan areas *san-fu* Three adjuncts

Three senior statesmen (Former Han) *san kung* Three excellencies

Transport officer *p'u* Coachman

Treasury *t'ang-ts'ang* Treasury

Troops of the five colonels *wu-hsiao ping* Troops of the five colonels

Tutor *fu* Tutor

Unit of five families *wu* Unit of five families

Warrior with sword and lance *chien-chi shih* Warrior with sword and lance

Weaving house *chih-shih* Weaving house

Western Garden *Hsi yüan* Western Garden

Western quarters *hsi-ti* Western lodge

Workshop *kung-kuan* Office of workmen

Wu-chi colonel, wu and chi colonels *wu-chi hsiao-wei* Wu and Chi colonels

HAN WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

*Equivalents**

Length:	1 *ts'un*		23.1 mm
	1 *ch'ih*	(10 *ts'un*)	23.1 cm
	1 *pu*	(6 *ch'ih*)	1.38 m
	1 *chang*	(10 *ch'ih*)	2.31 m
	1 *li*†		.415 km
Capacity:	1 *ko*		19.968 cc
	1 *sheng*	(10 *ko*)	199.687 cc
	1 *tou*	(10 *sheng*)	1.996 liters
	1 *shih* (also 1 *hu*)	(10 *tou*)	19.968 liters
Weight:	1 *shu*		.64 g
	1 *liang*	(24 *shu*)	15.36 g
	1 *chin*	(16 *liang*)	245 g
	1 *chün*	(30 *chin*)	7.37 kg
	1 *shih*	(4 *chün*)	29.5 kg
Area:	1 *ch'ing*	(100 *mou*)††	11.39 English acres

*See Homer H. Dubs, *The history of the Former Han dynasty* (Baltimore, 1938–55), Vol. I, pp. 276–80; Nancy Lee Swann, *Food and money in ancient China* (Princeton, 1950) pp. 360f.; Wu Ch'eng-lo, *Chung-kuo tu-liang-heng shih* (Shanghai, 1937); and Michael Loewe, "The measurement of grain during the Han period," *TP*, 49:1–2 (1961).

†In certain contexts, the term *li* is used rhetorically rather than as a precise indication of distance.

††The enlarged *mou* of 6 × 240 *pu*, introduced during Wu-ti's reign.

HAN EMPERORS

TABLE I

Emperors of Former Han

Personal name*	Date of birth	Dynastic name	Acceded	Died
Liu Pang	?	Kao-ti	202**	195
Liu Ying	206	Hui-ti	195	188
		Shao-ti Kung††	187	184
		Shao-ti Hung††	184	180
Liu Heng	?	Wen-ti	180	157
Liu Ch'i	?	Ching-ti	157	141
Liu Ch'e	?157	Wu-ti	141	87
Liu Fu-ling	?95	Chao-ti	87	74
Liu Ho	?	–	74 (reigned 27 days)	
Liu Ping-i	?91	Hsüan-ti	74	49
Liu Shih	74	Yüan-ti	49	33
Liu Ao	51	Ch'eng-ti	33	7
Liu Hsin	25	Ai-ti	7	1
Liu Chi-tzu	9	P'ing-ti	1 B.C.	A.D. 6
Liu Ying†	A.D. 5			

Notes: All dates B.C. unless otherwise noted. The dates given for emperors and empresses in Tables 3 to 9 are for the periods in which they were actually enthroned. Other details are added when they are relevant.

*Of these emperors, the following were of age at the time of their accession: Kao-ti, Wen-ti, Ching-ti, and Yüan-ti. The only ones to accede "regularly," as sons succeeding their fathers, were Hui-ti, Ching-ti, Wu-ti, Yüan-ti, and Ch'eng-ti. (For the exceptional circumstances of Chao-ti's accession, see p. 179.)

†Selected for the imperial succession on the death of P'ing-ti and declared heir apparent (A.D. 6) during the regency of Wang Mang, who held the title of acting emperor; demoted on the accession of Wang Mang as emperor of Hsin in A.D. 9.

††Infant emperors during the period of domination by the empress Lü.

**King of Han 206 B.C.: Adopted title Huang-ti 202 B.C.

TABLE 2

Emperors of Later Han

Name	Date of birth	Title	Acceded
Liu Hsiu	15 January 5 B.C.	Kuang-wu-ti	5 August 25
Liu Yang	28	Ming-ti	29 March 57
Liu Ta	57	Chang-ti	5 September 75
Liu Chao	79	Ho-ti	9 April 88
Liu Lung	105	Shang-ti	13 February 106
Liu Yu	94	An-ti	23 September 106
Liu I	[unknown]	Shao-ti	18 May 125
Liu Pao	115	Shun-ti	16 December 125
Liu Ping	143	Ch'ung-ti	20 September 144
Liu Tsuan	138	Chih-ti	6 March 145
Liu Chih	132	Huan-ti	1 August 146
Liu Hung	156	Ling-ti	17 February 168
Liu Pien	173 or 176	Shao-ti	15 May 189
Liu Hsieh	181	Hsien-ti	28 September 189

Notes: Only three emperors (Kuang-wu-ti, Ming-ti, and Chang-ti) were aged 18 or more at the time of their accession.
X = Given name of consort unknown.

Died	Consorts
29 March 57	(i) Kuo Sheng-t'ung; empress 10 July 26; divorced 1 December 41; d. 22 July 52 (ii) Yin Li-hua; b. 5; empress 1 December 41; d. 26 February 64
5 September 75	(i) Ma *X*; b. 40; empress 8 April 60; d. 16 August 79 (ii) Chia *X*; honorable lady
9 April 88	(i) Tou *X*; empress 3 April 78; d. 18 October 97 (ii) [unknown] (iii) Sung *X*; honorable lady; d. 82 (iv) Liang *X*; honorable lady; d. 83 (v) Shen *X*; honorable lady
13 February 106	(i) Yin *X*; empress 96; divorced 24 July 102 (ii) Teng Sui; b. 81; empress 21 November 102; d. 17 April 121 (iii) [unknown]
21 September 106	
30 April 125	(i) Yen Chi; empress 1 June 115; d. 28 February 126 (ii) Li *X*; honorable lady; d. 115
10 December 125	
20 September 144	(i) Liang Na; b. 106; empress 2 March 132; d. 6 April 150 (ii) Yü *X*; beautiful lady
15 February 145	
26 July 146	
25 January 168	(i) Liang Nü-ying; empress 30 September 147; d. 9 August 159 (ii) Teng Meng-nü; empress 14 September 159; divorced 27 March 165; d. 165 (iii) Tou Miao; empress 10 December 165; d. 18 July 172
13 May 189	(i) Sung *X*; empress 171; divorced 178; d. 178 (ii) Ho *X*; empress 1 January 181; d. 30 September 189 (iii) Wang *X*; beautiful lady; d. 181
190 (demoted 28 September 189)	
21 April 234 (abdicated 25 November 220)	(i) Fu Shou; empress 20 May 195; d. 8 January 215 (ii) Ts'ao Chieh; empress 6 March 215; d. 2 July 260

INTRODUCTION

This volume gives an account of the first of the Chinese united empires, known respectively as the Ch'in, Former Han, Hsin, and Later Han dynasties. (The terms Western and Eastern Han sometimes appear in place of Former and Later Han.) The obvious dates marking the beginning and the end of the period are those of two key events: the establishment of the Ch'in empire in 221 B.C. and the abdication of the last Han emperor in A.D. 220. However, these two specified years should not be taken as the rigid limits of the period that is covered by this volume. The events of 221 B.C. were the culmination of developments of the preceding centuries, and of necessity the first chapter of the book refers readers to the incidents, personalities, and developments of the Warring States period. Similarly, although the abdication of Hsien-ti may be regarded as the formal end of the Han dynasty, the process of imperial disruption was already far advanced long before that date; it may even be maintained that in real terms the outbreak of the revolt of the Yellow Turbans, in A.D. 184, marked the end of Han imperial authority. In considering the political developments of these last decades, when a powerless emperor still occupied the Han throne, it is essential to look forward to the succeeding period, when the disruption of the Han empire had finally taken place and its territories split between the three coexistent kingdoms of Wei, Shu-Han, and Wu.

Similarly, in considering intellectual history it has been neither practical nor desirable to limit the volume to the precise period of the Ch'in and Han dynasties. It is necessary to refer to some of the philosophical antecedents that were developed during the kingdom of Ch'in, and without which the empire could not have been created. The late Professor Demiéville's chapter, written many years ago in the context of a volume planned on different lines, continues his account of Buddhist and Taoist philosophy and religion right up to the Sui dynasty (founded A.D. 581). The chapter was written as a unity, and whereas it would have been possible to divide it into two parts, on a chronological basis, between this

volume and Volume 2, we have preferred to retain it in its original form, as the themes that are discussed are best seen in their entirety.

Consideration of the available surviving sources for Ch'in and Han history shows immediately that the coverage that can be expected will be anything but complete, and that the evidence relating to many important themes and problems is unevenly distributed over the four centuries in question. Thus, we possess more information regarding economic development for Former than for Later Han, whereas the growth of great families and changes in social structure stand out more clearly for the first two centuries A.D. than for the preceding period. It is possible to discern patterns of political change during Former Han more clearly than for Later Han; and while more is known of the impact on the conduct of government of imperial consorts and their families for Later than for Former Han, the influence of key political personalities is in some ways to be seen more sharply during the earlier than in the later period. In the field of intellectual history, we are far less well informed for the period from 200 to 100 B.C. than for the following three centuries.

Chinese scholars, historians, and officials have been studying the Ch'in and Han empires for some two thousand years, and these dynasties were among the first to attract the attention of Japanese and Western scholars of China's imperial past. The object of this volume is to present a summary of the information that is available in the primary sources in the light of the most recent critical scholarship. The research that has been undertaken so far has, however, been spread somewhat unevenly over the various aspects of Ch'in and Han history. There has, for example, been far more research on the Former than on the Later Han period. There are also still a number of important subjects about which it is impossible to write with confidence. This volume, for example, lacks any attempt to analyze climatic changes and their undoubtedly far-reaching effects. Similarly, in spite of the striking recent advances in the study of Chinese science and technology, it still seems premature to attempt a summary of such developments during Ch'in and Han times. Nor is the time yet ripe to summarize the literary achievements of the period.

THE WRITTEN SOURCES AND THEIR PROBLEMS

Several of the contributors to this volume discuss the value and shortcomings of the sources on which they rely and explain the significance and problems of certain material. For a general assessment of Chinese historiography and its bias, and a consideration of the sources available for the study

of Ch'in and Han history, readers may be referred to a number of existing works.[1] In general, the historian of this period has perforce to rely almost exclusively on sources compiled in the peculiarly Chinese form of the Standard History (*cheng-shih*). Only exceptionally is it possible to call on other written evidence with which to identify a document on which the compilers of these works drew, to check the accuracy of their statements of fact, to examine questions of authenticity, or to balance their opinions and judgments.

Nevertheless, the very size and nature of the three Standard Histories in question, the *Shih-chi* and *Han shu* for Former Han, and the *Hou-Han shu* for Later Han, may allow some scope for alleviating these difficulties. None of the three works derive from a single author or compiler; the different groups of chapters were drawn up to satisfy different purposes; and internal consistency between the different parts of these works can be of considerable value in assessing their accuracy or validity. The critical handling of the material thus demands careful treatment.

The coverage of the three works is by no means uniform. The *Shih-chi* was designed as an overall account of all human history down to the time of its authors, and is thus concerned with the many centuries that preceded the empires before proceeding to deal with Ch'in and Han; it does not include a complete account of Former Han, stopping shortly after 100 B.C. None of the three Standard Histories treats the Hsin dynasty as an integral period worthy of the same respect accorded to a dynastic house that, however short-lived, was regarded as legitimate. The *Hou-Han shu* does not include chapters of genealogical tables corresponding with those for Former Han in the other two histories.

In all three histories it is necessary to bear in mind that the various contributors wrote from somewhat different points of view, and also at different lengths of time after the events that they were describing. Ssu-ma T'an (d. 110 B.C.), originator of the *Shih-chi*, is well known for his partiality for certain forms of Taoist thought; this does not appear to have been shared by his son, Ssu-ma Ch'ien (ca. 145–ca. 86), who was responsible for

1 E.g., Édouard Chavannes, *Les Mémoires Historiques de Se-Ma Ts'ien* (Paris, 1895–1905), Vol. I, pp. vii-lxi; Nancy Lee Swann, *Pan Chao: Foremost woman scholar in China, 1st century A.D.* (New York and London, 1932); Charles S. Gardner, *Chinese traditional historiography* (Cambridge, Mass., 1938); Hans Bielenstein, *The restoration of the Han dynasty*, Vol. I (*BMFEA*, 26 [1954], 9–81); Burton Watson, *Ssu-ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China* (New York, 1958); A. F. P. Hulsewé, "Notes on the historiography of the Han period," in *Historians of China and Japan*, ed. W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank (London, 1961), pp. 31–43; Rafe de Crespigny, *The records of the Three Kingdoms* (Canberra, 1970); Donald D. Leslie, Colin Mackerras and Wang Gungwu, *Essays on the sources for Chinese history* (Canberra, 1973); and Chen Chi-yun, *Hsün Yüeh (A.D. 148–209): The life and reflections of an early medieval Confucian* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 84–126.

the greater part of the work, ending his life in circumstances of political disgrace. Some of the extant chapters of the *Shih-chi* were added by yet another hand, in order to make good deficiencies that are known to have existed from a very early time. The *Han shu* was begun by Pan Piao (A.D. 3–54), whose essay on sovereignty forms a basic document in the history of political ideas. The work was completed mainly by his son Pan Ku (A.D. 32–92), whose sister Pan Chao (A.D. ?48–?116) added some contributions. The *Han shu* also incorporates essays such as Ma Hsü's (fl. ca. A.D. 141) account of astronomical phenomena, and an abbreviation of Liu Hsin's (d. A.D. 23) catalogue of books assembled in the imperial library.

Traditionally it has been believed that the compilers of the *Han shu* drew extensively on the *Shih-chi* for the chapters that concern the first century of Former Han; but it has also been argued that for some parts of the two works the reverse process has taken place – that some of the original chapters of the *Shih-chi* which had already disappeared at an early date have been replaced by the extant versions, compiled on the basis of the corresponding parts of the *Han shu*.[2] Finally, the extant *Hou-Han shu* is in fact a composite work, of which the chapters of imperial annals and biographies were written, on the basis of earlier material, by Fan Yeh (398–446), while the treatises were drawn up over a century earlier by Ssu-ma Piao (240–306).

Of these three Standard Histories, it is the *Shih-chi* and the *Han shu* that have exercised the greater impact on Chinese historical writing, not only because they established the form for the subsequent histories, but also on account of their literary qualities; for they have always been admired and imitated as examples of clear, trenchant prose. Of these two works, the *Han shu* is written by an author who admired ancient literature, and sometimes includes archaisms. In the corresponding chapters that treat the same subject, the text of the *Shih-chi* is often identical with that of the *Han shu*, except for subtle variations of language; where it varies, the *Shih-chi* may be reflecting contemporary linguistic usage rather than seeking to imitate an obsolete style. Both works include passages that are vivid, and even dramatic, such as the account of the last battle and the death of Hsiang Yü, or that of Li Ling's heroic advance into Central Asia, or the description of the passage of the Hindu Kush by venturesome travelers. The two histories also include dry statements or solemn pronouncements that derive from official or imperial decisions, and summaries of state documents.

To Western eyes, the Standard Histories suffer from a lack of sense of

2 See A. F. P. Hulsewé, "The problem of the authenticity of *Shih-chi* ch. 123, the memoir on Ta Yüan," *TP*, 61:1–3 (1975), 83–147; and Yves Hervouet, "La valeur relative des textes du *Che-ki* et du *Han chou*," in *Mélanges de Sinologie offerts à Monsieur Paul Demiéville* (Paris, 1974), pp. 55–76.

causality. In addition, certain types of information are regularly missing; for instance, genealogical information for the imperial, royal, and noble families does not include references for women as completely as it does for men. There is, as with all the Standard Histories, a great preponderance of information about political matters at the capital, and comparatively little about events in the provinces of the empire.

Quantitative information is provided only occasionally or sporadically. Thus, only two counts survive from the annual registration of the population, for A.D. 2 and A.D. 140, respectively; for the earlier of these counts, figures are included for a select 10 of the 1,577 counties of the empire, chosen presumably on account of their abnormally large size; for the other counties and for different periods we may sometimes be presented with a rhetorical statement. Precise figures – for example, those given for the registered population or the extent of arable land, or for the number of volumes in the imperial library – were probably based on a real count and are therefore likely to be more accurate, barring textual errors, than the round figures given, for example, for the size of the armed forces engaged in battles.

One particular example may be quoted wherein the lack of any external control for the Standard Histories is a special weakness. This is the treatment of foreign relations, which are presented in these works through Chinese eyes, and colored by the attitudes, prejudices, and records of Chinese officials. The peoples with whom the imperial officials were in contact at this time left no written records that would give their own account of these relations and their own view of their Chinese neighbors.

To some extent the historical record of the *Shih-chi*, *Han shu*, and *Hou-Han shu* may be corrected and supplemented by other literary works written during the period or shortly thereafter. Philosophical writings, which were not specifically intended as historical statements, often provide an insight into the motives of China's contemporary governors, and discussions of ethical values quickly resolve themselves into the guidance proper for an emperor or an official. A number of works were written to describe contemporary or ideal institutions. Some were later incorporated into the Classics and survive in their entirety. Others, which derive from the hands of highly respected scholars such as Ts'ai Yung (133–92) or Ying Shao (d. ca. 204) regrettably survive only in fragmentary form. A few complete books or essays (such as the *Yen-t'ieh lun* for Former Han, and Wang Fu's *Ch'ien-fu lun* for Later Han) that were written specifically as a criticism of contemporary policy or ways of life are of great value; they serve to correct or to confirm some of the more general statements of the histories, or some of the descriptions that appear to to be exaggerated. Finally, some of the Han

poets allude in rich imagery to the ideals or expectations of the court and describe the splendors of the capital cities with loving detail; others remind us sharply of the hardships suffered by the population at the hands of its government.

Until recently, independent archival material for Ch'in and Han was almost entirely limited to fragments of documents prepared in the course of the civil and military administration of the defense lines of the northwest. These fragments of wooden and bamboo strips first came to light at sites near Tun-huang, during the course of Sir Aurel Stein's journeys of exploration to Central Asia, between 1900 and 1915. Larger collections of fragments, dating between ca. 100 B.C. and A.D. 100, were found at the nearby sites of Chü-yen (Etsin-gol) during the Sino-Swedish expedition of Sven Hedin (1927–34).[3] Since 1972 these pieces have been supplemented by material that may well prove to be more valuable, as it consists of a number of rolls of complete documents, found again at sites near Chü-yen.

In addition to these documents, whether fragmentary or complete, that come from the periphery of the Han empire, since about 1960 a considerable amount of material has been found in some of the archeological sites of central China. These documents include lists such as rolls of registers, or legal provisions. They may concern aspects of official practice and public life that are not described elsewhere; they may have originated from levels of government that were somewhat lower than those of the official organs whose decisions were of sufficient importance for inclusion in the Standard Histories. Some of this newly found material is of a technical nature, the meaning of whose expressions is long forgotten, and yet awaits complete elucidation.

By no means the whole corpus of these documents has been published. Unevenly spread as it is in time and place, and dependent as it has been on the chance fall of the archeologist's spade, it is potentially of great value, as a means of determining how far the writ of imperial government was actually being implemented, particularly at the lower levels of the administration. In addition, these discoveries of archival material may possibly serve to corroborate the accounts given by the formal historians, or the accuracy of a received historical text, in the same way as copies of literary works that have been found in tombs confirm the authenticity of our received texts and testify to their accuracy to an astonishing degree.

3 For the texts of these documents, see Édouard Chavannes, *Les documents chinois découverts par Aurel Stein dans les sables du Turkestan Oriental* (Oxford, 1913); Henri Maspero, *Les documents chinois de la troisième expédition de Sir Aurel Stein en Asie Centrale* (London, 1953); Lao Kan, *Chü-yen Han chien k'ao-shih* (Taipei, 1960); Chung-kuo she-hui k'o-hsüeh-yüan k'ao-ku yen-chiu-so (ed.), *Chü-yen Han chien chia i pien* ([Peking]: 1980); and Michael Loewe, *Records of Han administration* (Cambridge, 1967).

ARCHEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Material objects that date from the Ch'in and Han periods aroused keen interest among Chinese antiquarians and collectors from at least the eleventh century. In more recent times, attention has been paid to the artifacts and monuments of the period by Western scholars such as Chavannes and Pelliot, and explorers such as Sir Aurel Stein. During the first half of the twentieth century, Japanese and American collectors and scholars likewise began to show interest in these matters, and some of the first books to describe the material evidences of history came from the pioneers who worked on this type of evidence, such as Berthold Laufer. During the 1920s the handful of Chinese, European, and American archeologists who were working in China tended to concentrate their efforts on prehistorical sites; on those of the recently identified Shang kingdom; or on the richly furnished tombs of the Chou period. But at the same time highly important work was also being done on a few sites from the Han period, by Japanese archeologists in Manchuria and Korea, or by specialists such as the members of the Sino-Swedish expedition during their exploration of Central Asia. A number of important monographs were published at this stage.[4]

After the disruptions of World War II and the civil war that followed, which led to the virtual cessation of archeological work, a major change affected archeology in China when the government of the People's Republic assumed responsibility. A considerable number of Chinese archeologists has been gradually trained, and many sites revealed during the course of construction works have been methodically studied and recorded. The results of these investigations have been published regularly in a number of specialist periodicals and monographs. And although these publications were discontinued during the years of the cultural revolution (1966–72), some archeological work was accomplished during those chaotic years and the results later published. Subsequently archeological publications have become more numerous, and their quality has improved consistently. Thanks to the cumulative results of training, China has now a large number of professional archeologists, but the extent of the finds that are continually coming to light is such that only a fraction of the work that is necessary can be completed.

4 E.g., Harada Yoshito and Tazawa Kingo, *Rakurō* (Tokyo, 1930); Mori Osamu and Naitō Hiroshi, *Ying-ch'eng-tzu report upon the excavation of the Han brick-tomb with fresco paintings etc. near Chien-mu-cheng-j, South Manchuria* (Tokyo and Kyoto, 1934); Koizumi Akio, *The tomb of painted basket and other two tombs of Lo-lang* (Keijo [Seoul], 1934); Oba Tsunekichi and Kayamoto Kamejirō, *Rakurō Ō Kō bo* (Keijo [Seoul], 1935); Yagi Shōzaburō, *Manshū kōkogaku* (Tokyo, 1944); Sven Hedin et al., *History of the expedition in Asia 1927–35* (Stockholm, 1943–45); Bo Sommarström, *Archaeological researches in the Edsen-gol region, Inner Mongolia, together with the catalogue prepared by F. Bergman*, 2 vols. (Stockholm, 1956–58).

In addition to the great majority of material evidence found in Ch'in and Han tombs, discoveries include the remains of city walls and palaces, and occasionally an industrial site such as an iron foundry. Examination of such sites and comparison with literary records has made it possible to reconstruct the plans of the capital cities and some of their buildings with confidence. Stone memorial shrines, principally from east China, are richly embellished with carvings whose subjects draw on mythology, historical incident, and scenes of everyday life. In the northwest, the remains of manuscripts to which reference is made above were found in the rubbish-pits of the Han garrison forces. There are also the remains of the watch-towers that those forces manned, and of some other buildings, such as a large granary.

While no accurate and up-to-date information is available, it may be estimated that at least 10,000 Ch'in and Han period gravesites have been identified. These are distributed over the entire Han empire and range in date over four and a half centuries. They include some where the deceased person or persons may be identified by name, and related to historical texts. For some a date may be assigned to the tomb, with greater or less precision; there are also some examples of multiple burial, at sites which amount almost to cemeteries. These burials range over the whole of society, from the immense and awe-inspiring tomb of the First Ch'in Emperor (d. 210 B.C.) or the splendid tombs of the kings and noblemen of the Han empire, to the rough and ready graves of convicts. While some of the graves have been identified as those of officials or even of persons prominent enough to be mentioned in the Standard Histories, the great majority are those of that great multitude that has left no memorial of their names or lives.

A few examples remain of the masonry gateways that flanked the entrance to tombs. Much more frequent are stone memorial stelae, erected in honor of a provincial or local official, or a prominent landowner. These stelae bear long inscriptions that recount the ancestry of the individual who was being honored, together with the offices that he had held, his public achievements, and the virtues with which he was credited. Considerable care was taken over both the literary and the calligraphic styles of the inscriptions, with the result that these became valued by bibliophiles and scholars for their literary and artistic merits; it is partly owing to the interest of such specialists that rubbings and facsimile texts or copies of a number of Han inscriptions have been preserved. The great majority of these inscriptions date from the Later Han period. Some of the information that they provide, such as details of family descent, may be accepted without reserve, and supplements that which is in the Standard Histories;

other material should be treated with reserve or scepticism, insofar as many of the inscriptions amount to panegyrics framed with appropriate rhetorical flourishes.

The principal situations wherein Ch'in and Han artifacts have been found are the unrobbed tombs of the prominent and wealthy members of society. Owing to the prevalence of a variety of beliefs about the afterlife, which predate the arrival of Buddhism in China, the funerary furnishings of these tombs are extraordinarily rich. They include precious objects of jade or bronze; vessels of bronze, lacquer, or pottery; instruments and symbolic objects used for religious purposes; talismans that would ensure a happy life hereafter; or musical instruments. In increasingly great volume, documents are being found, written either on the simple everyday stationery of wooden and bamboo strips, or as *éditions de luxe* on rolls of silk. Some of these texts were designed to help the deceased person in the life of the world to come; some may be related to the particular occupation that had been his on earth, be it that of scholar, official, legal specialist, or physician.

In addition to rare and precious objects and items included for their religious significance, tombs have yielded rich supplies of equipment used in everyday life, such as lamp stands, dishes and plates, weapons, or in the case of women, exquisite toilet boxes of lacquer. Some of the more richly furnished tombs also included supplies of clothing, food, drink, and even ready money. But perhaps the most characteristic of all funerary furnishings of Han tombs are the miniature models of buildings or objects that took their place in the regular business of life on earth. Some of these provide excellent evidence of how agricultural or other methods were improved by technology in those years. Such objects include carriages and their harnessed horses; boats with their crews; wellheads, millstones, or even farmyards, with their litters of pigs or equipment for threshing. Above all, the tombs contained figurines or depictions of the men and women who had shared a life in this world with the deceased person; they were represented in the tombs as simulacra who would provide him with company or service thereafter. Some of these figures or frescoes were those of a man's colleagues in official life; some had amused him as entertainers or musicians; some had acted in the more humble capacity of a servant, cook, charioteer, or handmaiden. Exceptionally, the body of the deceased person was preserved in a state of incorruption, thanks to the careful precautions taken by Han undertakers and the favorable conditions of terrain and climate.

The archeological evidence from the Ch'in and Han periods is spread very unevenly in time and space. The extent of the finds, which is continually growing, is now so great that it forbids full exploitation. Opportunity has not yet arisen to subject any site to a rigorous examination, with a view

to distinguishing different strata of occupation during Ch'in and Han. Likewise, there is necessarily a limit to the work of identification, analysis, and cataloguing of artifacts that can be achieved. A scheme of distribution, province by province, has yet to be completed with a view to establishing local characteristics or the circumstances in which ideas were transferred from place to place. Great strides have, however, been taken in drawing up schemata and chronological sequences of particular types of objects, ranging from styles of tomb structure to artifacts of bronze and iron.[5] The criteria of such corporate conclusions may be applied, with the necessary reserve, to the problems of dating certain sites that lack definite indication of chronology, in the form of inscriptions or other evidence. Chinese archeologists have been regularly applying carbon-14 and thermoluminescence tests to their material since 1973 and 1979, respectively, and the results of such tests have become steadily more accurate. In a variety of ways, archeology has served to correct or to corroborate the statements of the histories and other writings of Ch'in and Han. It is thanks to the combination of archeological evidence with our knowledge of Chinese mythology and religion that a new measure of precision has been introduced in tracing some of the early strands of cultural history.[6]

HISTORICAL SCHOLARSHIP

The Ch'in and Han periods have been closely studied by historians from very early times. Quite justly it has been seen as one of the peaks of Chinese achievement. Early western publications that considered Ch'in and Han China in historical terms include the writings of Martin Martini (1615–61) and somewhat later, de Mailla, de Guignes, du Halde, and Gaubil. It is largely on de Mailla's *Histoire générale de la Chine*, a translation of the *T'ung-chien kang-mu* (1777–85), that Edward Gibbon drew for his occasional reference to Han China. By now, it is probable that a greater

5 For comprehensive results drawn from a large cemetery near Lo-yang, see Lo-yang ch'ü k'ao-ku fa-chüeh-tui, *Lo-yang Shao-kou Han mu* (Peking, 1959).

6 For general summaries of archeological work, see Wang Zhongshu, *Han civilization* (New Haven and London, 1982); and Hayashi Minao, *Kandai no bunbutsu* (Kyoto, 1976). Important monographs published on recently discovered sites include the following: Yün-nan sheng po-wu-kuan, *Yün-nan Chin-ning Shih-chai-shan ku-mu-ch'ün fa-chüeh pao-kao*, 2 vols. (Peking, 1959); Hu-nan sheng po-wu-kuan and Chung-kuo k'o-hsüeh yüan k'ao-ku yen-chiu-so, *Ch'ang-sha Ma-wang-tui i hao Han mu*, 2 vols. (Peking, 1973); Nei Meng-ku tzu-chih-ch'ü po-wu-kuan wen-wu kung-tso-tui, *Ho-lin-ko-erh Han-mu pi-hua* (Peking, 1978); Chung-kuo she-hui k'o-hsüeh-yüan k'ao-ku yen-chiu-so and Ho-pei sheng wen-wu kuan-li-ch'u, *Man-ch'eng Han mu fa-chüeh pao-kao*, 2 vols. (Peking, 1980); Kuang-chou shih wen-wu kuan-li wei-yüan-hui and Kuang-chou shih po-wu-kuan, *Kuang-chou Han-mu*, 2 vols. (Peking, 1981); and "Yün-meng Shui-hu-ti Ch'in mu" pien-hsieh tsu, *Yün-meng Shui-hu-ti Ch'in mu* (Peking, 1981); Cheng Te-k'un, "Han burial remains in the Huangho basin," *Journal of the Institute of Chinese Studies, the Chinese University of Hong Kong*, 14 (1983), 145–272.

proportion of the primary source material is available in translation for Ch'in and Han than for any other corresponding period of imperial China.[7] In this connection particular tribute should be paid to those pioneer scholars who first addressed themselves to the daunting task of producing critical versions and editions of the *Shih-chi* and the *Han shu* for the Western reader, Édouard Chavannes and Homer H. Dubs.

In addition, a range of monographs have been published that treat particular aspects of Ch'in and Han history. These have sometimes translated relevant sections of one of the histories, providing a critical introduction that places the subject in its general context; others present an analytical examination of the subject in which primary sources are paraphrased rather than translated. In their various forms, such monographs have dealt with politics, the growth of institutions, legal theory and practice, social structure, economic development, foreign relations, intellectual trends, and religious beliefs and observances.

The first attempts at a critical appraisal of the Ch'in and Han empires date from the Han dynasty itself. Chia I's essay of enquiry into the errors that had brought Ch'in to ruin, which was written between 200 and 168 B.C., is incorporated in both the *Shih-chi* and the *Han shu*. By inserting their own comments and judgments at the close of each chapter of their Standard Histories, Ssu-ma Ch'ien and Pan Ku set a precedent that was to be followed in subsequent official Chinese historiography. Other writings also include a few telling statements of political theory, and criticisms of current institutional or political practice. For students of Former Han, the appraisals written by Hsün Yüeh (A.D. 148–209) and included in his *Han chi* are of particular significance, as the author lived so close to the times he describes. Other critics who were likewise writing outside the restraints of official history, and who were not inhibited by the need to comply with a traditional or favorable view of the current dynasty, included Wang Ch'ung (ca. A.D. 27–100) and Wang Fu (ca. A.D. 90–165). The point by point discussions of the *Discourses on salt and iron* (*Yen-t'ieh lun*), completed a few decades after 81 B.C., are of especial value.

Quite soon after their compilation, the *Shih-chi* and the *Han shu* were evidently causing readers difficulties, and scholars were writing explanatory notes. Meng K'ang (fl. 180–260) was one of the earliest commentators whose notes on the *Han shu* are known. The earliest surviving set of comments to the *Shih-chi* is that of P'ei Yin (fl. 465–472), who drew on material that was already some two hundred years old. Many of those notes

7 For a list of those parts of the *Shih-chi* that have appeared in translation, see Timoteus Pokora, in Chavannes, *Mémoires historiques*, Vol. VI, pp. 113f. No comparable list has been published for the *Han shu* or *Hou-Han shu*.

set out to explain the pronunciation of a character used in the text in an unusual or abnormal way; to identify place names with those of a later period; or to elaborate on the functions of certain officials. It is largely thanks to Yen Shih-ku (581–645), who took the trouble to collect some of these comments, that we owe the preservation of these early annotations.

In later days there emerged a tendency to look back to the Han age as a time of the most successful attempts yet known to establish and maintain an empire. At the same time there was no shortage of critical writers who had been stimulated by the problems of their own time and sought guidance by a study of past experience; they were able to write with corresponding hindsight on the personalities and achievements of Ch'in and Han emperors and statesmen, on their difficulties and their errors. Such reactions must necessarily be assessed in the light of the times when such critics were living, and the particular circumstances to which they were responding. It is therefore not surprising to find Liu Tsung-yüan (773–819) discussing the origin, merits, and disadvantages of a "feudal" disposition of territories (*feng-chien*), at a time when the T'ang government was suffering from acute difficulties in controlling its powerful and independent provincial governors. Su Shih (also known as Su Tung-p'o: 1037–1101) was composing his essays on Shang Yang, Chia I, and Ch'ao Ts'o at a time when fundamental issues were being raised concerning the methods and objects of imperial government and the possibility of arranging for some measure of economic co-ordination. Of all the Sung writers, Ssu-ma Kuang (1019–1086) must perhaps be singled out as the historical critic *par excellence*, who set out to place the rise and fall of dynasties and the successes and failures of officials within the major context of China's political and institutional development. In attempting to do so, Ssu-ma Kuang was writing with the benefit of a thousand years' experience of imperial government on which he could draw. In addition, he was one of the first Chinese scholars to recognize the importance of inconsistencies in different parts of the Standard Histories and to seek to establish a satisfactory solution to such problems.[8]

Mention must also be made of the contributions made to the study of Ch'in and Han history by the scholars of the Ch'ing dynasty, with their acute sense of criticism and the vast resources of learning on which they could call. The attempts made by recent Western scholars to present chapters of the three Standard Histories in translation to Western readers would hardly have been possible without the pioneer work of the Chinese

8 E. G. Pulleyblank, "Chinese historical criticism: Liu Chih-chi and Ssu-ma Kuang," in W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank, *Historians of China and Japan* (London, 1961), pp. 151f.

men of letters of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Those scholars were tireless in their pursuit of minor pieces of evidence that had long been overlooked, and in interpreting the writings of Ssu-ma Ch'ien and Pan Ku in the light of relatively new studies, such as phonology, epigraphy, or bibliography. Profiting from Ssu-ma Kuang's example, they took textual criticism of the histories to a considerably greater depth, drawing the attention of the reader to some of the more obscure, but clearly relevant, passages of Chinese literature.

The work of the Ch'ing scholars was highly practical, in their determination to solve problems of dating particular events and their sequences. In some cases they concentrated their energies on specialist topics, as may be seen in the notes of Hsü Sung (1781–1848), who studied the western regions of Central Asia, and their topography; or Ch'üan Tsu-wang (1705–1755), who determined to identify the place names that are mentioned in the original sources. The great volume of Ch'ing scholarship has been conveniently brought together by Wang Hsien-ch'ien (1842–1918) in his detailed commentaries to the *Han shu* and *Hou-Han shu*. Readers likewise have cause to thank Wang Hsien-ch'ien for his meticulous collation of different editions of those histories and for noting the cross references to their various parts that facilitate a deeper study of a personality or subject of the Ch'in and Han period. In more recent times, the government of the People's Republic has maintained the long-standing tradition of sponsoring the production of up-to-date editions of the Standard Histories. The punctuated texts, published by the *Chung-hua shu-chü*, Peking, from 1959 onward, are cited in the references given in this volume.

A number of short general histories of the Ch'in and Han periods by Chinese historians have appeared in recent years. These reflect widely different points of view, according to each author's purpose or ideological persuasion. Some represent the fruits of mature scholarship; some are written as school or college textbooks; and some were written for overtly propagandist purposes. These works range from the somewhat conservative work of Lü Ssu-mien, which almost constitutes a source book set out according to subject, to the highly original and critical work of Ch'ien Mu. More recently there have appeared short studies such as Chang Wei-hua's study of Han Wu-ti (1957), or Hung Shih-ti's booklet on the First Ch'in Emperor (1973), which was written at the time of China's political campaign to criticize Lin Piao and Confucius; writings of this type are as much a contribution to twentieth-century ideological struggles as works of history.

Recent Japanese studies of the Ch'in and Han periods are also significant. A copy of the *Shih-chi* is said to have been brought to Japan as early as 735. In 757 imperial orders were given for the study of the *Shih-chi, Han*

shu, and *Hou-Han shu*; and copies of the three works, some with Chinese annotation, feature in the earliest available list of Chinese books in Japan, compiled by Fujiwara no Sukeyo between 889 and 898. From the Edo period (1600–1867) onward, Japanese scholars have shown an active interest in Ch'in and Han history, as may be witnessed by the collections made by bibliophiles and the production of *Kanbun* editions of Han writings. One of the latest critical editions of the whole text of the *Shih-chi* to appear is that of Takigawa Kametarō, which was first published in 1932–34. The notes in this splendid edition, together with those in the edition of Ku Chieh-kang (1936) and those of Yang Shu-ta (1955), are among the latest to be formulated in traditional Chinese style. More recently, the work of Japanese scholars has abandoned such traditional models, and tended more toward analytical studies of personalities or institutions. The best examples of such work combine the modern Western critical disciplines with the wealth of traditional scholastic knowledge. It is also to Japanese scholars that we owe invaluable research tools, such as the comprehensive index to the *Hou-Han shu*,[9] or the study of Han artifacts by Hayashi Minao. Short histories of Ch'in and Han, profusely illustrated, take their place in some of the multivolume Japanese histories of China; the contributions of Professor Nishijima and Professor Ōba to such series provide excellent textbooks for the study of the period.[10]

CHARACTERISTIC DEVELOPMENTS OF THE EARLY EMPIRES

The four and a half centuries that separated the proclamation of the Ch'in empire in 221 B.C. and the abdication of the last of the Han emperors in A.D. 220 witnessed major evolutionary changes in almost every aspect of China's history. At the beginning of the period there could be no certainty that a centralized empire would be recognized as the ideal norm for governing mankind; by the end of Han its preservation had become the natural and accepted aim of every ambitious statesman, and educated officials could be expected to offer it their loyalty and services. Empire had first been founded on the basis of realist principles and experiments; the site of its capital city, either in Hsien-yang or Ch'ang-an, had been chosen for its strategic advantages; and for perhaps a century or more the primary objective of imperial government remained much the same as it had been under Ch'in, the steady consolidation, enrichment, and strengthening of the body politic. But from the founding of Later Han the transfer of the capital to

9 Fujita Shizen, *Go-Kan jo goi shūsei*, 3 vols. (Kyoto, 1960–62).
10 Nishijima Sadao, *Shin Kan teikoku*, Vol. II of *Chūgoku no rekishi* (Tokyo, 1974); and Ōba Osamu, *Shin Kan teikoku no iyō*, Vol. II of *Zusetsu Chūgoku no rekishi* (Tokyo, 1977).

Lo-yang signified a symbolic change. Imperial government now claimed that its administration was directed toward the betterment of the people of China, and ideological rather than practical considerations lay behind the choice of the new site. For Lo-yang had long been identified with the house of Chou; in Later Han it was the kings of Chou who were being invoked as the paragons of behavior, and the institutions of Chou, rather than those of Ch'in, that were to be adopted as the precedents for a just administration.

Some fifty years before the beginning of Later Han a change was introduced in the religious cults of the empire. From then onward these would be offered in honor of different deities from those respected hitherto, and new styles of worship were being observed. The first known adherents of Buddhism are not found in China before the second century A.D.; the religious disciples and organized worship of Taoist communities appeared toward the end of that century. In the meantime those men and women who were actively seeking immortality had evolved new concepts or extended ancient myth, and fastened their attention on new means of achieving this blissful result. A new view of cosmology had been introduced; more accurate calculations and the use of more advanced instruments had improved the standard of astronomical knowledge and made it possible to prepare a luni-solar calendar that was adjusted to a new degree of precision.

The government's sponsorship of education and learning had given rise to a more pronounced respect for the written word and to stronger attempts to propagate the ethical ideals expounded by Confucius and his disciples. There had emerged the concept of a canon of approved writings, each with its orthodox interpretations. These books, coming to be known as The Classics, were closely associated with Confucius' teaching; they both elicited the respect due to holy scripture and served as a source of ideological authority for the exercise of temporal rule. At the same time, the increased strength of Confucius' precepts is illustrated in another way. In the early days of Ch'in and Former Han, the artists who had been commissioned to embellish tombs and to provide their symbolic furnishings had drawn their inspiration from a rich mythology that long predated Confucius and the imperial age. By the close of the Han period the emphasis of such artistic creations had been turned to illustrating the Confucian ethical virtues; it was also responding to the intellectual demands of a sophisticated, rank-conscious society, whose hierarchies rested on the distinctions laid down in Confucian lore.

This type of social distinction and consciousness had not existed when Ch'in had been founded. It derived partly from the Confucian scheme of a community whose members are bound together in the service of their ruler, each one acting according to his own capacity and station. Social distinc-

tions had also been promoted by the positive needs of imperial government to fill the ranks of an expanding civil service and to make membership of that service a matter of pride. In this way, together with the growth of the organs of administration, there was also appearing a professional class of officials, neatly differentiated by grade and salary. At the same time, by the end of Han social distinctions that rested on wealth and landed property had been sharpened, to an extent that could not have been foreseen when the First Emperor of Ch'in proclaimed his rule. Tentative attempts to limit the size of landholdings, never undertaken with great enthusiasm or determination, had failed to prevent the growth of great families whose strength lay in their real property, their retainers and their economic resources. By the second century A.D., the growing independence of these families was affecting political cohesion and the maintenance of imperial authority in a way that presaged the breakup of the Han dynasty.

Han governments introduced a series of economic measures designed to coordinate the productive activities of the empire and to control the expenditure of its own resources; such measures included the government's monopoly on the minting of coin and on the exploitation of salt and iron, and attempts to stabilize prices and to organize the distribution of staple goods. New agricultural techniques, introduced in about 90 B.C., may have been combined with the extended use of iron tools to increase the production of grain in some measure. A gradual shift of population toward the south began to gather momentum, particularly during Later Han, and to transform the economic face of the empire. Further long-term economic effects resulted from the change of course of the Yellow River, which disrupted eastern China and caused massive destruction and loss of life in A.D. 11.

China's relations with the neighboring lands and peoples likewise underwent great changes during Ch'in and Han. The rise of a powerful confederation of the Hsiung-nu tribes at much the same time as the creation of the Chinese empires precipitated a clash of interests, and amicable relations could not be permanently sustained. Following the defensive measures taken by Ch'in, in the form of the first of China's Great Walls, nearly a century elapsed before the Han empire could take the military initiative, in the hope of eliminating this threat to security from the steppe. For the rest of the period, relations with China's northern neighbors fluctuated between outbreaks of hostilities and attempts at accommodation and compromise; but the territory of the Han empire was considerably extended, and new administrative districts were established in the northwest and the northeast.

Following expansion into the northwest, Han opened relations with the various small states that lay athwart the oases of the west; it was they who

could provide or withhold the water and shelter needed by the caravans that were beginning to ply their trade along the Silk Roads. In addition, the Han sphere of influence was being extended in the southwest and the southeast, where the indigenous population consisted of local tribes who, unlike the Hsiung-nu, posed no potential threat to Han interests. By the end of the Han period, the principal threat to Chinese security was coming more from the northeast than the northwest or west – where, however, considerable animosity persisted against Chinese officials, colonists, or armed forces. Indeed, in time it was the northwesterners who were to sweep into the cities of Ch'ang-an and Lo-yang, and drive the Chin dynasty to found a new capital in the south (A.D. 317).

Simultaneously with these developments in the religious, intellectual, social, and economic aspects of public life, and in foreign relations, the imperial administration steadily increased its ability to exercise an ever greater control and influence over the population. The increased number of officials made it possible to demand tax and statutory service with greater efficacy; the establishment of Han administration in the newly founded border commanderies brought a greater impact to bear on the peoples of the periphery. This administration rested on a complex body of codified laws. From the earliest days of the Ch'in empire, and indeed under the Ch'in kingdom before unification, codified law had prescribed in detail how certain types of behavior should be treated and how crimes should be punished, and these laws seem to have been rigorously enforced. There is little reason to believe that the judicial authorities of Han were any less anxious to administer the laws of the land than their predecessors, or that those laws were any less comprehensive, or noticeably less rigorous, than those of Ch'in.

In addition to the emergence of a highly competent and well organized civil administration, by 100 B.C. at the latest the armed forces of the empire had developed their own high standards of professionalism; these were maintained, perhaps somewhat more unevenly, for the rest of the period.

However, it is not possible to determine how great a measure of stability and security was imposed on the empire, or how such conditions varied from time to time or place to place. The Standard Histories leave us in no doubt as to the frequency of factional struggles, banditry, and uprisings. In the border areas the lives of the inhabitants were particularly liable to disruption and attack by those who roamed beyond the pale of imperial authority. Yet the settled and secure conditions of life in the cities made possible the rapid development of literature, learning and the arts, and the application of scientific and technological innovations. Plague and famine,

flood or drought beset the population from time to time. The central government and the provincial authorities could respond with appropriate relief measures, and we read of some fine achievements in this connection; but it cannot be known how effective such relief work can have been on a wide scale. It remains open to question to what extent the unified empires of Ch'in and Han maintained easier conditions of living or imposed harsher burdens on the population than the localized kingdoms of China that preceded or followed them. Nor can any answer be given to the question whether the enlarged and sophisticated civil administration of Han provided the people of China with a more secure and prosperous life, or made its principal impact as an instrument of oppression. We cannot tell whether the Chinese people as a whole were conscious and proud of their membership of a mighty empire, or resentful of the sacrifices and burdens that its government imposed.

The keynote of imperial policies changed by several stages during the four and a half centures of Ch'in and Han rule. Consolidation gave way to expansion, and this in turn was followed by retrenchment. The reassertion of imperial power that followed the restoration of Later Han likewise led to a renewed show of strength in Central Asia; but in the last century of Han the central government was fast losing its command of loyal service; dynastic strength and cohesion were ebbing fast, as self-confidence was waning and the conditions of separatism were developing.

From the outset, the institutions of government had included some devices designed to prevent the unlimited exercise of power by any individual or statesman. For this reason responsibilities were often divided between two civil officials, each of correspondingly high rank; two financial organs were set up within the central government; and the direction of a military campaign was at times shared between several generals – sometimes with disastrous results.

But such precautions did not succeed in ensuring dynastic stability or precluding moments of grave crisis that threatened the continued existence of the house of Liu. Very few decades passed that were free of dangers of subversion, and only a few of the Ch'in and Han emperors were able to complete their reigns without some major intrigue or quarrel centered around the imperial succession. However, within these troubled and unstable times there took place a major change in the concept of the sovereign that was to be of permanent significance in Chinese political thought. Cheng, king of Ch'in, had risen to become the first emperor by defeating his rivals on the field of battle; his exercise of authority rested on the force of arms. When the last of the Han emperors executed his deed of abdication in favor of the king of Wei, it was generally accepted that an em-

peror's powers derived from the charge entrusted to him by the superior authority of Heaven. In theory, if not entirely in practice, Chinese imperial sovereignty was henceforth to be displayed as resting on a spiritual charge rather than on material success.

These major developments in religious practice, intellectual outlook, and political ideology were the result of a steady cumulative process. But the crucial formative decisions which gave them force were taken during the half century from about 30 B.C. to A.D. 20. It was in those years of dynastic weakness and civil warfare that much of Han's permanent heritage to the later dynasties took shape. That heritage has frequently been assumed to be characterized by Confucian ideals, and those ideals have been regarded as the bulwark against attempts at insurrection, insubordination, or the exercise of unauthorized powers. In this connection it is as well to reflect that the structure of the Han, and indeed of many of the later imperial governments, owed a deep debt initially to the models and practices of Ch'in, which they castigated as cruel and despotic; and from Later Han onward the ideals to which many dynastic houses have aspired or pretended were those first adopted by Wang Mang, always denounced as a usurper. The adverse judgments that tradition has passed on the government of Ch'in and upon Wang Mang deserve reassessment in the light of their influence on later history.

CHAPTER 1

THE STATE AND EMPIRE OF CH'IN

Ch'in long existed as a small state or principality and then, very briefly, as a major dynasty and empire. Its genesis as a state goes back to the traditional date of 897 B.C.,[1] but half a millennium had to pass before it really began its march toward universal rule around the middle of the fourth century. By contrast, the Ch'in dynasty and empire lasted only fifteen years before being cut short in 206 by civil wars from which arose the subsequent Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220). Yet so vital were the political and cultural changes of these years that they gave the epoch an importance out of all proportion to its brevity.

The year 221 B.C., which marks the shift from state to empire, is consequently by far the most important single date in Chinese history before the revolutionary changes of the present century. Illustrative of the fame of the empire even beyond the Chinese world is the strong probability that the name Ch'in is the ancestor of "China" and other cognate designations in various non-Chinese languages. "Thinai" and "Sinai," for example, appear as names of the country in Greek and Roman writings of the first and second century A.D. The Chinese themselves, however, always resented the Ch'in empire because of the harshness with which it achieved its rule, and therefore only very rarely used the name to refer to themselves; their common designation for themselves was and is the Central Country (*chung-kuo*).[2]

1 The date is traditional because divergent Chinese chronologies exist for events prior to 841 B.C. The founding of the Chou dynasty, for example, is traditionally placed in the year 1122 B.C., but the actual date was probably around a century later. (Hereafter in this chapter all dates are to be understood as B.C. unless otherwise specified.)

2 The derivation of "China" from "Ch'in" was first suggested in 1655 by the Jesuit Martin Martini in *Novus Atlas Sinensis* (Preface, p. 2). The topic has been discussed many times since, most fruitfully by Berthold Laufer, in "The name China," *TP*, 13 (1912), 719–26; and by Paul Pelliot, in the two articles "L'origine du nom de 'Chine,' " *TP*, 13 (1912), 727–42; and "Encore à propos du nom de 'Chine,' " *TP*, 14 (1913), 427–28. For a long time a major difficulty was the mention of "the land of *Cīna!*" as the home of silk textiles, found in Book 2 of the famous Indian treatise on political theory, the *Kautilya Arthaśāstra*. If, as asserted by some scholars, this text was composed around 300 B.C., this would of course considerably antedate the Ch'in unification of 221. Recently, however, by the application of computer techniques to the text, it has been possible to demonstrate with fair certainty that Book 2 belongs to a literary stratum which was probably not composed much before

A critical enumeration of primary sources and modern studies will be found in Appendix 1. Here it need only be said that the most important single source is Ssu-ma Ch'ien's monumental *Shih-chi* or *Historical records*, covering all of Chinese history from legendary times to around 100 B.C. Its fifth and sixth chapters provide a chronicle of events in the Ch'in state and empire from beginning to end, and are the normal sources for what is narrated here unless otherwise specified. In addition, the *Shih-chi* contains other chapters of chronicle, monograph, and biography that are likewise important for Ch'in. Many, but not all of these, are included in the partial French translation of the *Shih-chi* by Édouard Chavannes, *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien*.[3]

The limitations of the *Shih-chi* and other literary sources for the study of Ch'in history are touched upon in Appendix 1, which also refers to the increasing importance of archeology for the historian of ancient China. Preeminent among the several archeological discoveries which the appendix enumerates is the group of Ch'in legal texts recovered from a single tomb in 1975. These will be referred to frequently.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

As a preliminary to any meaningful survey of Ch'in history before 221, it is necesssary to understand in broad terms the political and social conditions that obtained during the Chou dynasty (trad. 1122–256 B.C.). Particularly important are the many varieties of changes that convulsed the Chinese world during the last two or three centuries of that epoch.

When the house of Chou overthrew the Shang dynasty (probably somewhere near the year 1025 rather than at the traditional date of 1122), the new rulers allocated the conquered lands as fiefs to members or close allies of their own family, descendants of the former Shang rulers, and certain local potentates who were allowed to keep their previous holdings. In this way the Chinese world became divided into a multitude of political entities; some 170 are believed to have existed during the Chou subperiod known as the Spring and Autumn period (722–481). Most of these, of course, were extremely small, and they in turn were internally fragmented by subdivision into estates given to relatives or officials of each ruling house. In the course of time many principalities were destroyed or greatly

A.D. 150. Thus the major obstacle to the equating of Ch'in with China disappears. See Thomas R. Trautmann, *Kautilya and the Arthaśāstra: A statistical investigation of the author and evolution of the text* (Leiden, 1971), pp. 174–84 and esp. 177.

3 Édouard Chavannes, *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien*, Vol. I-V (Paris, 1895–1905; rpt. Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1969), Vol. VI (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1969). Hereafter in the footnotes this will be abbreviated to *MH*.

reduced in size by constant warfare, so that by the advent of the next Chou subperiod, appropriately known as that of the Warring States (403–221), only seven major states remained.[4] This number included Ch'in in the far western extremity of the Chinese *oikoumene*, but not the house of Chou itself. The latter had lost most of the political power it once exercised when in 770 it was forced by a barbarian attack to abandon its western capital near modern Sian (in Shensi) and to reestablish itself, much shrunken in size and significance, at its secondary eastern capital near the modern Loyang (Honan).

Both non-Marxist and Marxist historians have been exercised over the appropriate use of the term *feudalism*. Non-Marxists have debated whether it is the appropriate word to characterize the sociopolitical conditions of Chou China, and if so whether it applies to all or only some of its approximately eight centuries. In the opinion of this writer, parallels with European feudalism are sufficiently close to justify use of the term during the first four or five centuries of the Chou period. Thereafter, however, it must be applied in an increasingly restricted sense to describe only the vestiges of feudal conditions persisting in varying degrees within the major principalities. These, by the beginning of the Warring States period, had become completely independent nation-states.

For Marxist historians, the major problem is that of periodization. The transition from slavery to feudalism (in the Marxist sense) is taken for granted, the only question being when. To this the answer has been less than unanimous. Chinese Marxists, after earlier fluctuations, seemed to reach general agreement in the 1970s that the transition took place during or just prior to the final two and a half centuries of the Chou. Following Mao Tse-tung's death in 1976, however, there were discreet indications of renewed interest in the question of periodization, suggesting the possibility that this topic might again be opened to scholarly debate. Meanwhile, Soviet historians remained less ready to commit themselves, and when they did, tended to place the transition considerably later than did Chinese scholars – perhaps as late as the third century A.D. (the end of the Han empire).[5]

4 Various divisions of time have been adopted for ease of reference to the latter centuries of the Chou period, sometimes without historical significance. Thus the years 722–481 are described as those of the *Spring and autumn annals* (*Ch'un ch'iu*), insofar as that chronicle happens to run through those years. Similarly, the term Warring States derives from the *Stratagems of the warring states* (*Chan-kuo ts'e*), which does not cover a precisely marked period. The subperiod of 403–221 concludes very properly with the formation of the first united empire in 221; and the choice of 403 as the initial year, rather than various other possibilities, has the merit of marking the highly important division of the kingdom of Chin into the kingdoms of Hann, Wei, and Chao, which took place in that year (for Hann, see note 37).

5 For the Chinese point of view before the death of Mao, see Kuo Mo-jo, "Chung-kuo ku-tai-shih ti fen-ch'i wen-t'i," *Hung-ch'i*, 1972.7, 56–62 (also in *KK*, 1972.5, 2–7). An English translation, "The periodization of Chinese history," may be found in *Chinese studies in history*, 6:4 (1973), 3–15. There Kuo sees the shift from slavery to feudalism as coinciding roughly with the shift from the

What is important at this point is to gain a bird's-eye view of the major changes of the last two or three centuries of the Chou period. The nine suggested categories that follow are overlapping to some extent and are not necessarily presented in order of importance.[6]

Technological changes

Current archeological opinion dates the beginnings of the use of iron in China not later than the seventh or, at the most, the sixth century B.C. On the literary side, the earliest reference is that in the *Tso chuan* history,[7] which under the year 513 records that penal laws were inscribed on a set of iron tripod vessels in the state of Chin. Weapons, agricultural implements, and vessels, all made of iron, have been recovered from tombs of Warring States times, and it is quite possible that a developing iron technology was one factor in the increase in agricultural production believed by many scholars to have taken place during these centuries. Other factors would have been the growing use of irrigation and draining techniques and of fertilizer, and especially the bringing of large new land areas under cultivation.

Yet the effects of these and other technological improvements should not be overrated. Iron still remained relatively rare throughout the Warring States period, and what there was of it was frequently cast, not forged, and hence relatively soft and brittle. Many implements continued to be made of bronze, stone, wood, or shell. Furthermore, some vital aspects of the improved agricultural technology are extraordinarily difficult to measure and date. Thus there is great controversy as to when animal-drawn ploughs began to replace a much more primitive but apparently long-persisting hoe cultivation. On the basis of exceedingly slender evidence, the beginnings of the traction plough in China are variously ascribed by Chinese scholars to around 400, to an age one or two centuries earlier, or even to pre-Chou times. The earliest unequivocal reference in literature – one, however,

Spring and Autumn to the Warring States period. Later, however, he – or at least the scholars writing under his direction – become much more specific: China's age of slavery, he or they write, came to an end in 476 B.C. See Kuo Mo-jo, ed., *Chung-kuo shih kao* (Peking, 1976), Vol. I, p. 399. For the Soviet point of view, see Gilbert Rozman, "Soviet reinterpretations of Chinese social history," *JAS*, 34:1 (1974), 64; also E. Stuart Kirby, *Russian studies of China: Progress and problems of Soviet sinology* (London, 1975), pp. 60–65.

6 Somewhat differently arranged, these and similar changes are discussed at much greater length in Cho-yun Hsu, *Ancient China in transition: An analysis of social mobility, 722–222 B.C.* (Stanford, 1965).

7 For this document, see P. van der Loon, "The ancient Chinese chronicles and the growth of historical ideals," in *Historians of China and Japan*, ed. W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank (London, 1961), pp. 26–27. For the history of metallurgy in China, see Yang K'uan, *Chung-kuo ku-tai yeh-t'ieh chi-shu ti fa-ming ho fa-chan* (Shanghai, 1956); and Joseph Needham, *The development of iron and steel technology in China* (London, 1958).

which points to a considerable period of earlier development – is datable only to the Han dynasty (around 90 or 85 B.C.).[8]

Demographic changes

The improvement in agriculture was probably accompanied by a growth of population, despite the simultaneous intensification of warfare. During the Warring States period cities seem to have increased significantly in number, size, and complexity of plan. One of several indications is the considerable length of several of their walls, as revealed by archeology. Yet here again the evidence is scattered and quite inadequate to provide anything approaching specific population figures. The one exception, a literary statement which suggests a population of 350,000 for one of the state capitals, is rhetorical and cannot be seriously considered, despite the use that has been made of it by some scholars. (It and other questionable statistics are discussed below in Appendix 3.)

Military changes

The overwhelming impression given by the Warring States sources is that of intensifying warfare. At first sight, therefore, the statistical information prepared by Cho-yun Hsu appear surprising: According to this, the 259-year span of 722–464 witnessed only 38 years without war, whereas the 242-year span of 463–222 had no less than 89 such years.[9] In this case, however, the subjective impression is more meaningful than the statistical measurement, for the latter obscures the fact that the wars of the Spring and Autumn period, while more frequent and involving more states simultaneously than those of the Warring States, were also much smaller, shorter, and less intense.

Warfare during the earlier period was dominated by chariot-riding aristocrats who fought one another according to rules of chivalry and for whom prestige and "face" meant more than practical gain. The later wars were dominated by professional generals who fought grimly to acquire territory and resources for whatever state employed them. The role of war chariots (always hard to maneuver in irregular terrain) diminished greatly, while that of massed infantry correspondingly increased. From the horseback-riding pastoral peoples of Inner Asia, the Chinese learned, at the end of the

8 On the traction plough, see Derk Bodde, *Festivals in classical China* (Princeton, 1975), pp. 230–31. For technological advances and agricultural developments in the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States periods, see Chapter 10 below, pp. 546f.
9 Hsu, *Ancient China in transition*, p. 56, table 5, p. 64, table 6.

fourth century (specifically in the state of Chao in 307), how to use mounted archers as an important supplement to infantry. Probably around the same period the Chinese also invented the crossbow, which remained a major weapon throughout much of Chinese history. Other advances in military technology included those connected with the defending and attacking of walled cities.

On the quantitative side, a problem of credibility arises in connection with the sizes of armies reported for the latter years of the Warring States. A similar problem occurs in connection with the large battle casualty figures. In Appendix 3, both problems are discussed in greater detail.

Political changes

The nobles who had been allocated territories by the house of Chou at the beginning of that dynasty became the founders of hereditary ruling houses which in the course of time increasingly separated themselves from the Chou rulers. Especially after the forced shift of Chou from west to east in 770, its rulers came to be disregarded and even virtually forgotten by their one-time vassals. Hence the final destruction of Chou by Ch'in in 256 no longer carried much political significance. Well before that time, the principalities previously subject to Chou leadership had evolved into separate nation-states sharing, in varying degrees, a common language and culture, but maintaining military and customs barriers between one another, and ever ready to intrigue or ally, to make war or peace.

Meanwhile, within several of the individual states themselves, increasing centralization of political power was taking place at the expense of subordinate hereditary landholders and officials. The major procedure for doing so was the organizing of land into new administrative units known as commanderies (*chün*) and counties (*hsien*). Such units were administered, respectively, by governors and magistrates who were usually appointed and paid by the central state government, to which they were responsible; their positions were also usually not hereditary. Initially this system was probably instituted to govern land either newly colonized or newly captured from another state. Gradually, however, it probably came to be applied to the lands of the internal fiefholders, whose power and wealth were thereby circumscribed.

The county, which is the earlier of the two units, is first mentioned in Ch'in in 688. However, there are reasons for questioning this date and believing that such administrative entities may really have originated in the southern state of Ch'u, where the county is definitely mentioned in 598 and may conceivably have existed considerably earlier. The commandery

came a good deal later, its earliest mention being in the state of Wei around 400. The military origin of the commandery – its use for bringing newly acquired border land under central state control – is much more evident than that of the county, which in a fair number of cases appears to have been left in the hands of hereditary local administrators. At first the commandery may have been regarded as less important than the county because of its location on the frontiers; but if so, this condition was soon reversed. The county came to form a level of administration subordinate to the commandery. By the final Chou century, a single commandery might be subdivided into anywhere from one to two dozen counties. The significance of the commandery/county system for the Ch'in empire and later history will be discussed below.[10]

Administrative changes

In Ch'in and several contemporary principalities, the political changes just noted were accompanied by an evolution toward more sophisticated institutions and organs of central government. There was a growing professionalization and specialization in the holding of office – in short, a trend toward that bureaucratic form of administration which was to become the most distinctive aspect of the imperial Chinese state.

One significant development was the adoption of various quantitative procedures, such as the maintenance of population and taxation registers, statistics on crop returns, and the like. The use of these techniques in Ch'in will be referred to repeatedly below (see especially pp. 38 and 51).

Another important institutional innovation was the introduction of written, codified law. Such law increasingly came to replace the traditional and largely unwritten, but tacitly accepted, rules of customary behavior known as *li* (a word varyingly rendered as "traditional mores," "rules of polite behavior," "ceremonial practices," etc.). The first really clear-cut instance was the inscribing of books of punishments (*hsing shu*) on a set of bronze tripod vessels in the state of Cheng in 536. Similar steps were taken in this and other states in 513, 501, and later; in Ch'in, the major steps in legal codification took place under Duke Hsiao and his adviser Shang Yang, in the middle of the fourth century.

As the term *hsing shu* suggests, the laws were primarily penal in nature.

10 For a more extended discussion, see Derk Bodde, *China's first unifier: A study of the Ch'in dynasty as seen in the life of Li Ssu* (280?–208 B.C.) (Leiden, 1938), pp. 133–43 and 238–46. For the thesis that the *hsien* originated in Ch'u rather than Ch'in, see Herrlee G. Creel, "The beginnings of bureaucracy in China: The origin of the *Hsien*," in his *What is Taoism? and other studies in Chinese cultural history* (Chicago and London, 1970), pp. 121–59.

They were not promulgated in all states, nor were they always applied equally to all sectors of the population. Together with other administrative changes, however, their advent was important in the gradually quickening movement toward the creation of the imperial bureaucratic state. The statesmen and thinkers who advocated changes in this direction became known in later times as the School of Legalists, and the wholehearted adoption of such ideas and techniques by Ch'in was undoubtedly a major reason why it was able to move from state to empire.[11]

Changes in agrarian relationships

During the early Chou centuries, the peasants who constituted the overwhelming bulk of the population were apparently attached as dependents to the land cultivated by them, in family units, for their overlord. Such a system of land tenure, an idealized form of which was described as the well field (*ching t'ien*) system, almost surely existed, though modern scholars have questioned almost every aspect of its operation. In reality it could hardly have conformed with the rigidly geometrical pattern ascribed to it by Mencius (ca. 372–ca. 289) and other writers of late Chou and Han. According to the idealized accounts of these men, each large square of land, known as a well (*ching*), was subdivided in checkerboard fashion into nine lesser land plots, of which eight were individually cultivated by eight occupying families for their own needs. The ninth and central plot was cultivated communally by all eight families to provide the usufruct for the overlord.

The well field system has been the subject of a good deal of sentimentalizing by much later writers looking back nostalgically at the imagined virtues of communal living in an earlier and simpler age. As the system actually functioned, however, it probably provided little incentive to the cultivators to increase their output above required minimum needs, aside from pressures exerted by the bailiff of the overlord. On the other hand, the overlord had certain obligations to feed, clothe, and otherwise protect his dependents, as well as their families.

Beginning in 594 in the state of Lu, however, new systems of taxation are recorded as having been instituted in several states. Though the entries

11 For a contrary view – one that sees written legal codes as having been known and used extensively in early Chou times, considerably before the 536 code – see Herrlee G. Creel, "Legal institutions and procedures during the Chou dynasty," in *Essays on China's legal tradition*, ed. Jerome A. Cohen, R. Randle Edwards, and Fu-mei Chang Chen (Princeton, 1980), pp. 26–55 and esp. 28–37; also Herrlee G. Creel, *The origins of statecraft in China*, Vol. I. *The Western Chou empire* (Chicago and London, 1970), pp. 161–68. The adduced evidence, however, seems scattered, ambiguous, and uncertain. In our opinion, it is unlikely that written laws, if they did exist earlier, were in fact arranged to form an ordered and consistent whole; and it is also questionable whether they were really publicized to the general population in the manner attributed to the laws of 536.

are brief and enigmatic, it would seem, generally speaking, that the new taxes consisted essentially of payments made in kind by the peasants in place of the former personal labor service. In some instances, these payments may have gone directly to the central state government instead of to the immediate overlord, thus resulting in a gradual dissolution of the traditional relationship between overlord and dependent. Probably the dissolution was hastened by the growing amounts of former wasteland brought under cultivation in each state, which lay outside the traditional system of enfieffed domains.

It has been argued that the new freedom of the peasants as semi-independent cultivators may have encouraged them to work harder, thus contributing to the increase in agricultural output postulated for the late Chou period. But the new freedom also forced the peasants to become wholly responsible for their own needs, without the protection formerly provided by the overlords. By the last century of Chou, the buying and selling of land had become widespread; the result was the acquisition of large amounts of land by the wealthy, while the peasants were often reduced once more to tenancy or to hiring themselves out as farm laborers. If anything, the disparity between rich and poor may have increased rather than diminished from late Chou times through Ch'in and so into Han. However, the paucity and obscurity of the sources often make such generalizations little more than guesswork.

Changes in power relationships

It should not be supposed that those who in late Chou times exercised political power or bought land for themselves were necessarily descendants of the aristocratic families that had ruled principalities or held estates in the early Chou period. On the contrary, the dynamics of change led to an increasing degree of social mobility among the top political strata. Many of the old noble families declined or disappeared and were replaced by persons of obscure origin who were not directly connected by birth to the top families.

Most of the upstarts probably came from that lower fringe of the aristocracy known as gentlemen (*shih*) – men of good birth but without titles of nobility, who served as warriors, officials, and supervisors in the state governments and noble households, or who lived on the land, which in some cases they may even have cultivated themselves. Cho-yun Hsu, on the basis of a statistical study of 516 persons politically active during the Spring and Autumn period and 713 persons likewise active during the Warring States period, finds that the percentage of persons of obscure origin more than doubled from the one period to the other: from 26

percent for the Spring and Autumn period to 55 percent for the age of the Warring States.[12]

During the final century or so, the ranks of the social unknowns were further swollen by men of plebeian birth, such as merchants, whose wealth enabled them to acquire land and power. In these various ways, by the late Warring States period a new class of landlords and officeholders had already came into being – the direct ancestors of that class of scholar-gentry which was to continue as the dominant elite throughout Chinese imperial history.

Commercial and industrial changes

The late Chou period undoubtedly witnessed a considerable development of commerce and industry even though, as in the case of so much else, there is no way of measuring what happened with any exactness. A significant indication is the appearance of various kinds of metal currency of fixed value in different states, especially during the fifth and fourth centuries. (The currency of Ch'in is said to have been first issued in the year 336.) Such coinage obviously facilitated commercial transactions, even though certain commodities, such as grain and cloth, continued to be used as exchange media, especially for large transactions. Commercial development of course helped the growth of cities, and there was also a tendency toward specialization of industry according to locale. The names of some prominent merchants are recorded in the *Shih chi* and elsewhere, beginning with Tzu-kung, a disciple of Confucius, and culminating with Lü Pu-wei, chancellor of Ch'in shortly before the Ch'in unification. The great merchants did not deal with staples, which were bulky and perishable, and profitable only in times of shortage; rather, they concentrated on luxury goods or the products of hills and lakes. The government was not immediately concerned with these, as it was with the collection and distribution of staples.

Intellectual changes

Beginning with Confucius (551–479), the last three centuries of Chou saw the rise of systematic speculative thinking, mainly embodied in some half-dozen schools of thought, but also expressed by individual thinkers not readily classifiable under any school. These schools and thinkers probably originated chiefly from the emerging *shih* class, and their discussions and writings inevitably focused on the political and social problems the dynamic changes of the age had made so urgent. In this chapter it will be

12 Hsu, *Ancient China in transition*, p. 39, table 4.

convenient to use the names Confucian, Legalist, Taoist, etc., to designate these intellectual configurations, even though the Chou thinkers to whom such labels are commonly applied were probably much less aware of belonging to distinctly separate "schools" than the Han scholars by whom they were thus initially classified.

Among the many new intellectual trends (frequently found expressed in more than one "school"), only a very few can be listed here: (1) A tendency to discard the old supernatural and mythological explanations of how the universe operates, and to interpret it instead in terms of nonanthropomorphic natural forces and tendencies (i.e., the *Tao* or Way, the negative and positive principles known as *yin* and *yang*, the so-called Five Elements). (2) An emphasis upon the need, at least in theory, for the ruler's basic prerequisite of noble birth to be positively complemented by intellectual and moral qualifications making him worthy of the all-important task of rulership. (3) But, inasmuch as rulership is normally hereditary, a parallel emphasis on the training of an educated class of nonhereditary officials to serve as advisers to the ruler. This emphasis marks a sharp departure from the traditional view of officeholding as based solely on good birth, and at the same time points toward the civil service system of imperial China, with its recruitment of personnel based on competitive examinations. (4) Emphasis on the ideal of social harmony, albeit a harmony based on inequality. In other words, the emphasis is on the readiness of each individual to accept his particular place in a structured hierarchy, and to perform to the best of his ability the social duties that pertain to that place. (5) Emphasis on a universalism consisting not only of political but also of ideological and cultural unity, and providing the indispensable basis for peace, good government, and social well-being.

Hints of this last theme can be traced back to early Chou times, as expressed politically in the idea that under Heaven there can be only a single ruler. (It has, in fact, been a dominant motif throughout Chinese history.) During the late Chou period it constituted the intellectual counterpart of the political movement toward centralized power discussed under "Political Changes" above. Thus to the rulers, statesmen, and generals of the age, it supplied potent ideological justification for conducting the intensifying military struggles that finally led to empire.

THE STATE OF CH'IN: THE EARLY CENTURIES (897?–361 B.C.)

The legendary ruler Chuan-hsü (allegedly third millennium B.C.) had a granddaughter who, while weaving, swallowed an egg which a swallow had

dropped near her. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son whose descendants included helpers of the legendary rulers Shun and Yü. Such is the mythological origin of the house of Ch'in and of the collateral house of Chao, which was to rule a neighboring state by that name in northwest China.[13]

However, for those uninterested in mythology, the real story of Ch'in begins with Fei-tzu, a petty chieftain and clever horsebreeder who, in 897 (traditional chronology) was given a small attached appanage (*fu-yung*) by the Chou king so that he might raise horses for the Chou royal house; shortly afterward his descendants had taken the title duke (*kung*).[14] This appanage, called Ch'in, was located at modern T'ien-shui in Kansu province, about 190 miles up the Wei River west of the modern city of Sian (in Shensi). Subsequently, some half-dozen shifts of capital brought the Ch'in farther east, the major moves being those of 677, when a new capital was built at Yung (the modern Feng-hsiang, Shensi, some ninety miles west-northwest of Sian), and again in 350, when the final transfer was made to Hsien-yang (about twelve miles northwest of Sian). Here there will be no effort to present a systematic history of events before 361 (when the reformer Shang Yang came to Ch'in), but only to touch upon a few salient features.

Much of the energy of the early Ch'in rulers was devoted to military struggles with the "barbarians" known as Jung who lived to the west and north, and who in 822 killed one Ch'in ruler. After a major Ch'in victory in 623, however, references to the Jung became rare as the Ch'in state acquired more power and became increasingly involved in wars and intrigues among the Chinese states themselves. The last Jung attack on Ch'in is recorded for 430, and Ch'in's capture of twenty-five walled towns from the Jung a century later, in 315, suggests that by then at least part of this once pastoral people had become sedentary.

There is no question that culturally, and probably ethnically, the rulers and people of Ch'in were much influenced by their tribal neighbors. Throughout its history, Ch'in had the reputation of being a barbarous and "un-Chinese" state. "Ch'in has the same customs as the Jung and Ti [barbarians]," exclaimed a noble of the adjoining state of Wei to his king in 266. "It has the heart of a tiger or a wolf. . . . It knows nothing about traditional mores (*li*), proper relationships (*i*), and virtuous conduct (*te*

13 The house of Shang (the dynasry preceding the Chou) likewise traced its origin to a miraculous conception induced by ingesting a swallow's egg. For myths of ancestral origin, see K. C. Chang, *Art, myth and ritual: The path to political authority in ancient China* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), pp. 10–13.

14 Fei-tzu and his three immediate successors ruled without fixed titles of nobility, but beginning with Duke Chuang (821–778) and continuing until 325, all Ch'in rulers held the title of duke.

hsing)."[15] And in 237 Li Ssu, the future chancellor of the Ch'in empire, stated in a memorial to the future First Emperor:

Now the beating of earthen jugs, knocking on jars, . . . and striking on thigh bones, the while singing and crying "Wu! Wu!" . . . such indeed was the music of Ch'in.[16]

Ch'in's gradual adoption of institutions and cultural practices from other parts of China is illustrated by several entries in the *Shih-chi*'s fifth chapter. Annalists were first established in the Ch'in administration to record events in 753. In 676 Ch'in adopted the summer sacrifice and festival known as Fu, and in 326 it adopted the still more important winter counterpart known as La (which continued through Han times as the major New Year festival).

Two cultural contributions of dubious merit have to do with human sacrifice. The killing of human victims to accompany a prominent person when he died had been widely practiced in the Chinese culture area during the Shang dynasty, and continued through Chou until its latter part, when a movement arose to replace actual victims with figurines made of pottery or wood. By Han times, the practice of human sacrifice had apparently disappeared from China proper.[17]

In Ch'in, when Duke Wu died in 678, it is recorded that "for the first time" men were sacrificed (sixty-six of them) to accompany him in death. In 621, when Duke Mu died, the largest known number of victims, 177, was recorded.[18] In 384 the practice was officially forbidden in Ch'in, probably because of the growth by this time of humanitarian ideals. In 210, however, when the First Emperor died, many of his concubines, together with many workers who had labored on his tomb, were buried with him to prevent disclosure of the secrets of his tomb.

Another kind of human sacrifice, also apparently borrowed by Ch'in from its eastern neighbors, is commemorated in a single entry under the year 417. This states that "for the first time" a [Ch'in] princess was given

15 *Shih chi* 44, p. 1857 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. V, p. 179). *Li*, *i*, and *te hsing* are all Confucian terms.

16 *SC* 87, pp. 2543–44 (Bodde, *China's first unifier*, p. 19).

17 See Cheng Te-k'un, *Archaeology in China*, Vol. III. *Chou China* (Cambridge, 1963), p. 46; and Chang Kwang-chih, *The archaeology of ancient China*, 3rd ed. (New Haven, 1977), p. 366. In Inner Asia, however, tribal groupings perpetuated the practice, resulting in a final recorded instance taking place within China itself in 1398. In this year, when Chu Yüan-chang, founder of the Ming dynasty, died, he is said to have been followed in death by thirty-eight of his forty concubines, acting in accordance with "Mongol custom." See Teng Ssu-yü, "Chu Yüan-chang," in *Dictionary of Ming biography, 1368–1644*, ed. L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang (New York and London, 1976), p. 391. The practice was abolished in Ming times during the reign of Hsien-tsung (1465–87).

18 A poem in the *Shih ching* (Book of Songs), no. 131, poignantly laments the deaths of three of these men. See Arthur Waley, *The Book of songs* (London, 1937), pp. 311–12; Bernhard Karlgren, *The Book of odes* (Stockholm, 1950), p. 84.

as a wife to the [Yellow] River. The entry reflects the custom in the adjoining state of Wei of annually selecting a beautiful girl to become the wife of the god of the Yellow River, known as Ho Po or Lord of the River. Decked in marriage finery, she would be set afloat on a raft resembling a marriage bed, which would eventually sink with its fair victim.[19]

On the administrative and economic side, 456 is the first incontrovertible date when a county was established in Ch'in.[20] In 408 it is recorded that "the grain was first taxed" – a very important entry because it indicates a probable shift for the Ch'in peasantry from performance of labor services for their immediate overlord to payment of land taxes in kind (probably eventually directly to the state government). Similar developments had taken place earlier in other states.

On the political side, Ch'in's rise to prominence began in 770, when Duke Hsiang of Ch'in provided protection for P'ing, king of Chou, while the latter shifted his capital from west to east following an attack by the Jung which had killed P'ing's father. As a reward, P'ing raised the status of the Ch'in territory from attached appanage to that of a full principality (*kuo*), enabling the Ch'in rulers thereafter to deal with the heads of other principalities on a level of equality. In 750, following a battle in which Ch'in defeated the Jung, it asserted sovereignty over the people remaining within the old Chou royal domain after the Chou government had made its eastward move.

Prior to the fourth century, the most prominent Ch'in ruler was Duke Mu (659–621), around whom many stories have clustered. In 645, through war with the neighboring state of Chin, he extended the Ch'in territory to include everything west of the Yellow River. In 623, after annexing considerable territory from the Jung, he was recognized by the Chou king as "hegemon [*pa*] over the Jung of the west."[21] Yet this political growth was not sustained. In 385, after prolonged struggle which had started in 412–408, the state of Wei (one of three states into which Chin

19 The river god and his lore are described in detail in Arthur Waley, *The nine songs* (London, 1955), pp. 48–52. About the same time that this practice was reported in Ch'in, tradition alleges that it was wiped out in Wei by a famous official who, seeing that shamanesses were responsible for the annual selection of the river bride, ordered several of them to be flung into the river themselves so that they would become involuntary brides of the god. Although the historicity of this story has been questioned by Timoteus Pokora, "Hsi-men Pao in fiction and history," *Altorientalische Forschungen*, 8 (1981), 265–98, esp. 268–72, Dr. Pokora does not appear to question the reality of the cult of the river god itself, including the "marriage" ceremony. See the official's biography in *SC* 126, pp. 3211–12 (Pokora, "Hsi-men Pao," pp. 268–70; J. J. de Groot, *The religious system of China* [Leiden, 1892–1910; rpt. Taipei: Literature House, 1964], Vol. VI, pp. 1196–98).

20 On the commandery/county (*chün/hsien*) system, and the dating of the first county, see note 10 above.

21 Another indication of his "greatness" is the fact, noted above, that when he died in 621 he was followed to the grave by 177 human victims.

had by then divided) succeeded in completely regaining the territory west of the Yellow River which Chin had lost. In 361, when Duke Hsiao of Ch'in came to the throne, the *Shih-chi* says that his state was still regarded by the others as an inferior outsider.

THE ADOPTION OF REFORMS (361–338 B.C.)

The vital events in Ch'in history before the unification–events without which that climax could never have been reached–have to do with Duke Hsiao (361–338) and his adviser, the Legalist Shang Yang (d. 338). Shang Yang (also known as Kung-sun Yang, Wei Yang, and later as the lord of Shang) was the descendant by a concubine of the ruling house of a petty principality. As a youth he became a minor official in the state of Wei, Ch'in's traditional enemy to the immediate east. Failing to gain recognition there, he went to Ch'in in 361 in answer to an appeal by the newly installed Duke Hsiao for someone to help him recover the territory west of the Yellow River lost to Wei in 385. Shang Yang quickly gained the duke's confidence, and for the next twenty years (359 onward) introduced radical political and economic reforms despite strong opposition from certain individuals. It was during this period that the Ch'in capital was shifted (in 350) to its final location at Hsien-yang.

Besides serving as Ch'in's chancellor, Shang Yang personally led military campaigns against Wei, from which he had come; by 340 these had forced that state to shift its capital eastward and restore to Ch'in the lost territory. As a reward, Shang Yang was given a fief within Ch'in consisting of fifteen estates, with which he also acquired the title of the lord of Shang. His downfall, however, came with the death of his patron, Duke Hsiao, in 338. Sometime previously Shang Yang had applied the law to two tutors of the heir apparent as retaliation for wrongdoing committed by the heir himself. When the latter acceded to the throne in 338, he speedily accused Shang Yang of plotting rebellion. Shang Yang tried to flee, but he was slain in battle and suffered the final ignominy of having his corpse torn to pieces by chariots.

Shang Yang's economic and political reforms are unquestionably far more important than his military achievements. They are difficult to assess, however, not only because of the obscure way in which they are described in his biography in the *Shih-chi* (ch. 68), but also because the important Legalist text which bears his name, the *Shang-chün shu* (Book of Lord Shang), consists of more than one layer of material, none of it probably written by Shang Yang himself. Yet some of it, especially the earlier

portions, probably reflects his thinking.[22] With these difficulties in mind, the following is a summary of the reforms.

Political reforms

In 350, coincident with the creation of the new capital at Hsien-yang, a portion of Ch'in was divided into thirty-one counties, each administered by a (presumably centrally appointed) magistrate. This was a significant move toward centralizing Ch'in administrative power and correspondingly reducing the power of internal hereditary landholders.[23]

Agrarian reforms

In the same year of 350, Shang Yang "opened up"—that is, probably did away with—the longitudinal and horizontal paths (*ch'ien* and *mo*, respectively) of the cultivated fields (*t'ien*). Despite the cryptic wording, what this seems to mean is that he abolished the old fixed landholding system (the well field system) by which peasant families cultivated land plots of roughly equal size for their overlord, and replaced it by a more flexible system in which the sizes of land units could vary. Expressed in Western agricultural terminology, one might say that Shang Yang did away with the balks and headlands separating one field from another.

This interpretation is supported by the statement in the same sentence[24] that "the *fu* and *shui* taxes were equalized"; although neither of the two terms is defined, the statement is interpreted as recording a further step in the replacement of labor services by taxation in kind, such as had already started in Ch'in in 408. The disintegration of the old fixed land tenure system is additionally confirmed by what the Han Confucianist Tung Chung-shu says in a memorial to the throne of about 100 B.C. Shang Yang's reform, he remarks, made it possible for the people "to sell and buy" farmland.[25] Probably, besides altering the status of Ch'in's peasants,

22 This text, together with Shang Yang's biography (*SC* 68) and much else, is translated and discussed in Jan Julius Lodewijk Duyvendak, *The Book of Lord Shang* (London, 1928; rpt 1963). See also L. S. Perelomov, *Kniga pravitelya oblasti Shan* (*Shan tsyun shu*) (Moscow, 1968); and Li Yu-ning, ed. *Shang Yang's reforms and state control in China* (White Plains, N.Y., 1977).

23 The figure of 31 comes from Shang Yang's biography, whereas *SC* 5, p. 203, gives the figure as 41, which is probably incorrect; see Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 65 note 1. What proportion of Ch'in territory thus became centrally administered is unknown. Though probably considerable, it was certainly not total, because Shang Yang in 340, as noted above, received fifteen estates as a fief, and this land presumably lay outside the system of counties.

24 *SC* 68, p. 2232 (Duyvendak, *The Book of Lord Shang*, pp. 18–19).

25 Quoted in *HS* 24, p. 1137 (Nancy Lee Swann, *Food and money in ancient China* [Princeton, 1950], p. 180).

the reform also encouraged the peasants of other states to come to Ch'in (then still relatively thinly populated) in the hope of acquiring land. No doubt too, the reform was yet another step toward reducing the power of the hereditary landholders.[26]

Law

Shang Yang emphasized law (*fa*) as the most important device for upholding the power of the state, and he further insisted that it must be made known to all. Pillars were erected in the new capital (probably in front of the palace gate) so that newly promulgated ordinances (*ling*) could be posted on them. He likewise insisted that the law be applied equally to all: "The punishments did not spare the strong and great."[27] It was the application of this principle to the tutors of the heir apparent which, as noted earlier, led to Shang Yang's own downfall. The purpose of his laws was to uphold a system of rewards and punishments which would serve, respectively, as incentives for meritorious conduct and deterrents for wrongdoing.

Group responsibility

On the punitive side, the principle of group responsibility for crime was emphasized. The population was divided into units of five or ten families each,[28] within which all members were held collectively responsible for the wrongdoing of any individual. According to Shang Yang's biography:

> Whoever did not denounce a culprit would be cut in two; whoever denounced a culprit would receive the same reward as he who decapitated an enemy; whoever concealed a culprit would receive the same punishment as he who surrendered to an enemy.[29]

26 A very different interpretation, dependent upon a reinterpretation of several words in the key sentence in Shang Yang's biography (*SC* 68, p. 2232), is offered by Hiranaka Reiji, *Chūgoku kodai no densei to zeihō* (Kyoto, 1967), pp. 21–41. According to this interpretation, Shang Yang did not do away with the balks and headlands of the former field allocations, but rather demarcated the land into units of one thousand or one hundred Chinese acres each; these were then distributed to peasant families which at the same time were grouped for supervisory reasons into units of fives and tens (see "Group responsibility" below). This theory, besides its rather bold reinterpretation of several key words, would put Shang Yang in the position of replacing one rigid system of land tenure (the so-called well field system) with another of his own devising. Thus he would be running counter to what would seem to have been the general tendency of his time: the dissolving of the old fixed system of land tenure. For documentary evidence on the Ch'in system of demarcation, see pp. 49f.

27 *Chan-kuo ts'e* 3 (Ch'in 1), p. 75 (J. I. Crump, Jr., *Chan-kuo ts'e* [Oxford, 1970], no. 46, p. 54). For the laws of Ch'in, which may have been based on these provisions, see pp. 58f. and 537f.

28 Not, as stated by Duyvendak (*Book of Lord Shang*, p. 58), into units of five or ten *men*.

29 Duyvendak, *Book of Lord Shang*, pp. 14–15.

To reinforce this system of state-imposed morality, Shang Yang apparently tried to weaken the ties of family solidarity, initially by imposing double taxes on families having two or more adult males living together. Later (in 350) he issued an outright prohibition on cohabitation within the same household by fathers and adult sons or by one adult brother and another. All this comes from Shang Yang's biography. How strictly and effectively it was actually applied in his day is hard to determine. The laws excavated in 1975 from the grave of a Ch'in official, dating from shortly before 221 but probably going back in spirit to Shang Yang's time, do not seem exceptionally severe in this respect.

Be this as it may, the basic idea of dividing the population into small units for control purposes has, with variations and elaborations (the best known is the *pao-chia* system), been repeatedly carried out in imperial times and even as late as in republican China.

Incentives

To encourage meritorious conduct, a hierarchy of honorary ranks was instituted, traditionally said to be eighteen in number.[30] They bore such picturesque titles as official gentleman (no. 1, the lowest rank), no conscription (no. 4), and fifth rank counsellor (no. 9). At first the ranks were probably conferred primarily as rewards for military achievement ("He who cuts off one head is given one degree of rank").[31] Considerably later, however (the first clear-cut instance is recorded in 243), rank could also be gained by contributing grain to the government.[32] The ranks carried varying exemptions from labor services or taxes, as well as, for certain ranks, conferment of land or office. The ranks themselves were apparently not hereditary, but the land that came with some of them possibly was. The system continued throughout Ch'in and into the Han dynasty, when Shang Yang's original hierarchy of seventeen or eighteen ranks was increased to twenty, of which the lowest nine retained the same names as those of Shang Yang. By setting up a kind of meritocracy for actual achievement, the system was another step toward curtailing the power and prestige of the traditional aristocracy.

30 Despite the tradition, the more probable number is seventeen. See Michael Loewe, "The orders of aristocratic rank of Han China," *TP*, 48 (1960), 103, citing the research on Shang Yang's hierarchy by Moriya Mitsuo.

31 *Han-fei-tzu* 17 (43), p. 907 (W. K. Liao, *The complete works of Han Fei Tzu* [London, 1959], Vol. II, p. 215), quoting "the law of the lord of Shang."

32 *SC* 6, p. 224 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. I, p. 103): in 243, when locusts created famine conditions in Ch'in, "all those who brought 1,000 *shih* [approx. 20,000 liters] of grain were awarded one degree of rank." This figure is so high as to raise the question whether it is not due to textual error in the *SC*.

Economic policy

Shang Yang's major aim was to create a unified and powerful state based on an industrious peasantry and a disciplined army, whose soldiers, in fact, were recruited from the peasants. The "primary occupations" of agriculture and warfare were to be encouraged, and the "secondary occupations" of trading and manufacture of luxury goods were to be discouraged. The goal was a static agrarian economy resting on the work of a contented and settled peasantry, undisturbed by the movements of profit-seeking merchants and producers. In reality, the many social and other changes that were taking place of course prevented this utopia from ever being realized. However, the Legalist opposition to private mercantile activity, as adopted in early Han times by Confucianism, effectively prevented merchants and industrialists from ever gaining a dominant place in later Chinese society.

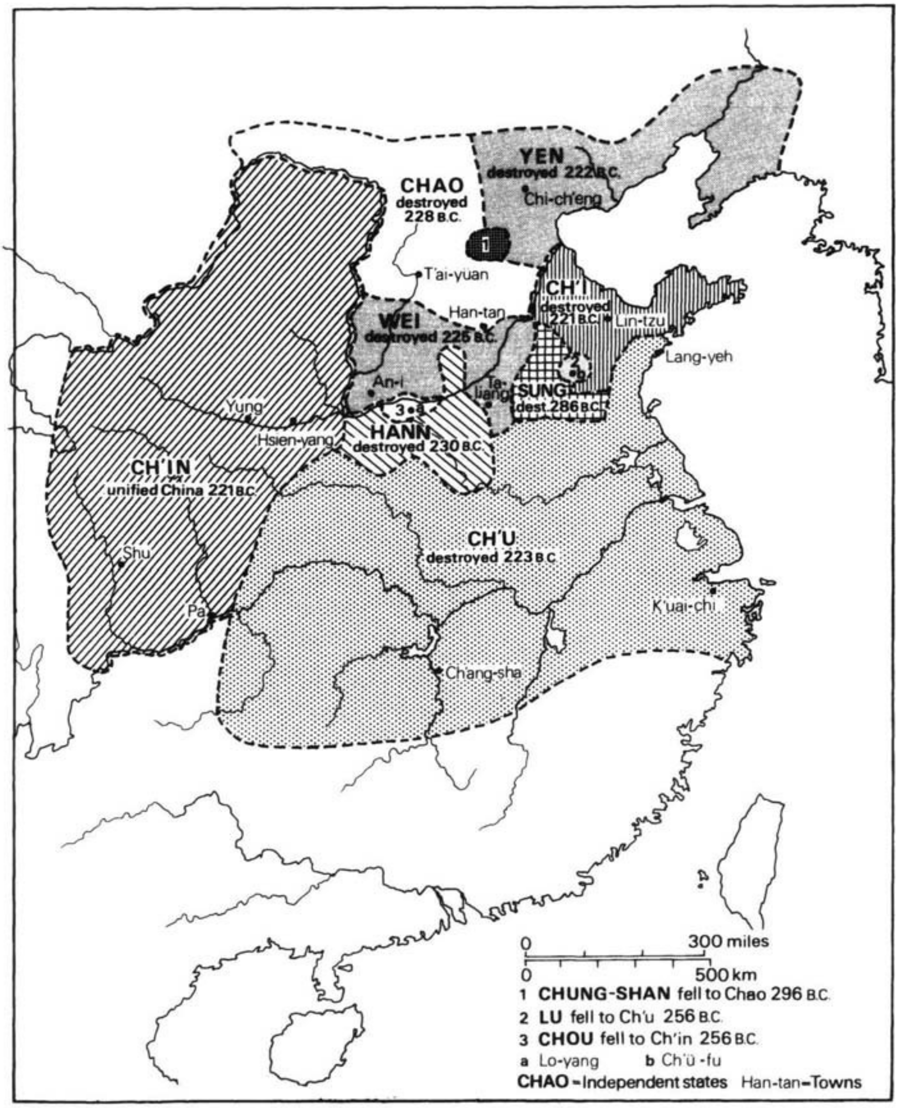
Standardization of measures

Finally, Shang Yang acted to standardize weights and measures. Several measures of his period have been excavated, including a well-known bronze *sheng* or pint inscribed with Shang Yang's name and a date corresponding to the year 344; its capacity is equivalent to 0.2006 liters. Shang Yang's interest in standardizing weights and measures was part of a broader interest in the quantitative and statistical aspects of government. (More will be said on this matter below; p. 50f.)

MILITARY GROWTH (338–250 B.C.)

From the time of Shang Yang onward, Ch'in's steadily growing power made it only a matter of time before it would triumph over its rivals. In 325 the then duke of Ch'in assumed the title of king (*wang*)–a step taken by all the major state rulers around this time, and one indicative of the low estate to which the house of Chou had fallen by then. In 309 the Ch'in government instituted the new office of chancellor (*ch'eng-hsiang*), subdivided into a chancellor of the left (the highest office below the ruler) and a chancellor of the right (the next highest office). In 256 Ch'in destroyed the Chou ruling house, but by this late date the act carried only symbolic importance.

Events during the period of a little over a century between the death of Shang Yang in 338 and the unification of 221 give no indication that the latter achievement was reached as the result of any consciously devised long-range strategic plan or design. Nevertheless, it may be observed that



Map 1. Pre-imperial China, ca. 250 B.C.
After Ōba Osamu. *Shin Kan teikoku no iyō.*

the process whereby one state or ruler, situated in western China, would come to dominate the other states or regions has often been repeated in the course of Chinese history. For a state situated in the west may be able to secure itself within the natural stronghold, bounded by mountain ranges, which lies within the modern province of Shensi; and from there it may be

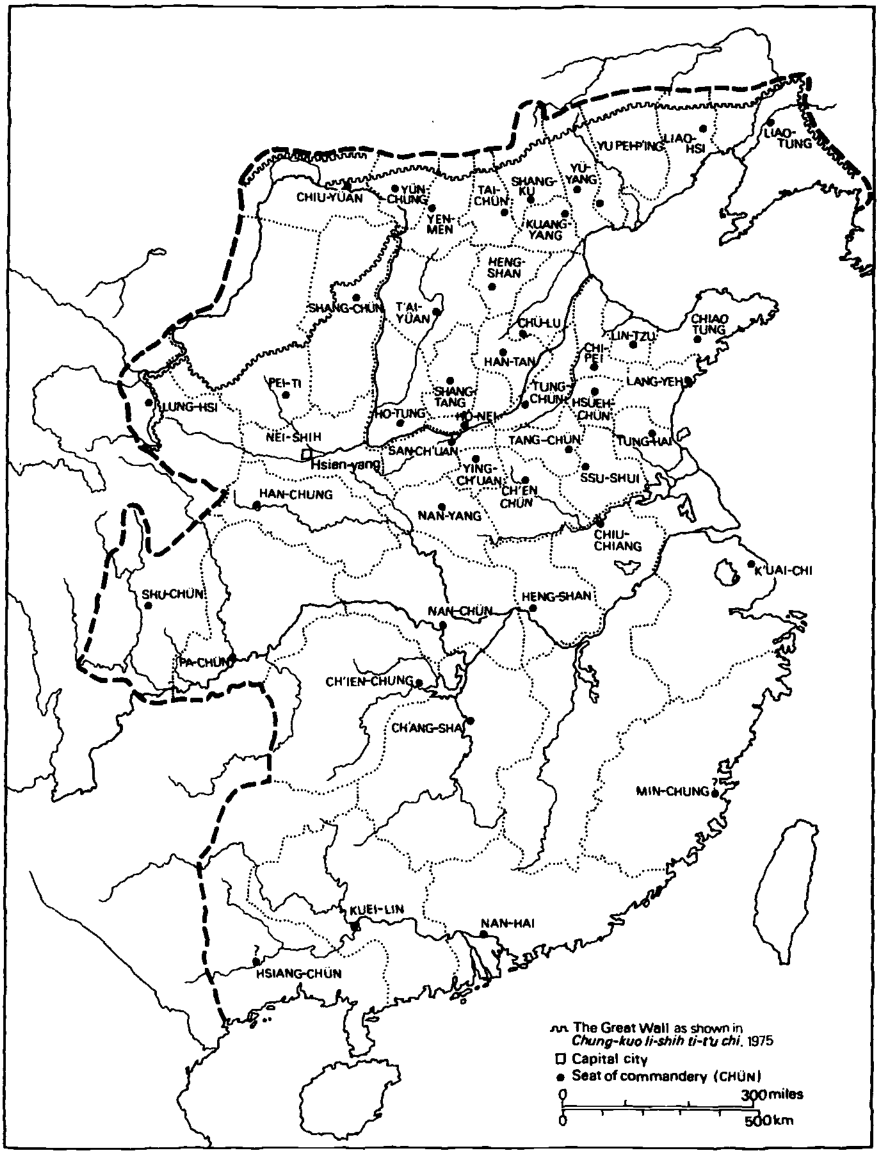
able to extend its dominion steadily in the face of potential enemies in the east. In the case of Ch'in, the process was marked by securing the southwest as a preliminary move, and thereafter proceeding fairly steadily in an easterly direction. The initial step was the seizure of the territory of Shu (the modern Ch'eng-tu plain area in Szechwan) from Ch'u in 316, quickly followed by that of Pa (the area around modern Chungking in Szechwan). Not only did the acquisition of these lands enable Ch'in to secure its flank, but their loss by Ch'u seriously weakened the power of that state, heretofore perhaps Ch'in's major rival.

In the meantime, Ch'in's rivals were far from unmoved by the spectacle of its steady growth in power and territory. If one is to believe the record of sources which may be fanciful rather than strictly historical, these decades witnessed considerable diplomatic activity. Two types of alliances were being forged. One of these was directed to withstanding Ch'in's advance by means of concerted action; in the other the various states recognized that resistance would be futile, and aimed at appeasement of or cooperation with Ch'in.

Most spectacular of the events recorded in the *Shih-chi* during the last century or more are the many large-scale military campaigns, some of them with casualty figures so enormous as to raise serious questions as to their credibility. Thus for the 130-year period of 364–234, the *Shih-chi* records fifteen major battles or campaigns in which Ch'in was involved and for which the casualty figures allegedly inflicted by Ch'in on its opponents are listed. In all but one instance, the figures amount to scores of thousands, and their grand total for the entire period of 130 years amounts to 1,489,000. Despite the intensification of warfare that undoubtedly marked the last century of the Warring States period, figures of this magnitude defy belief. (The reader is referred to Appendix 3 for a detailed discussion of these and other dubious statistics that crop up in this chapter.)

FINAL CONQUESTS AND TRIUMPH (250–221 B.C.)

The man who became known to history as the First August Emperor of Ch'in (Ch'in Shih-huang-ti; commonly abbreviated to Ch'in Shih-huang or the First Ch'in Emperor) was born in 259. His personal name of Cheng (Correct or Upright) was probably given to him because he was born in the first lunar month, which is commonly known in Chinese as the *cheng* or "correct" month. Though he formally mounted the throne in 246, it was only in 238, after putting on the cap and sword of adulthood, that he really began to exercise power. Until the unification he ruled, like his predecessors since 325, with the title of king (*wang*); only in 221 did he replace this with emperor, a title which he held until his death in 210.



Map 2. The Ch'in empire

The *Shih-chi* begins its sixth chapter with the first year (246) of the First Emperor's reign. For present purposes, however, it is more convenient to start the story a little earlier, at the year 250, when a very unusual figure, the merchant Lü Pu-wei, became chancellor of Ch'in.

Lü Pu-wei has several claims to fame. Not only was he the richest merchant of his time, but above all he was the only merchant in Chinese history to reach such an exalted political position. Besides this, he was to acquire notoriety for a reason which will presently become apparent. Very little, however, is known about his personal life. Like many other men who distinguished themselves in Ch'in, he was not a native of that state, but the sources differ as to his place of origin. Concerning his commercial activities, the biography in the *Shih-chi* (ch. 85) says only that "during his travels he bought cheap and sold dear."[33] That his fortune may have been based on luxury goods is possibly hinted at in a parallel account in the *Stratagems of the warring states,* in which he is represented as asking his father: "How much profit is to be gained from pearls and jade?"[34]

In Han-tan, the capital of Chao, sometime between the years 265 and 259, Lü Pu-wei encountered a scion of the Ch'in royal house who was a cadet son by a concubine of the then heir apparent. Tzu-ch'u, as this son was called, had been sent to live in Chao as a so-called hostage (it being a common practice at that time to exchange members of the nobility between states as pledges of good faith). Lü befriended Tzu-ch'u and then went to Ch'in, where by bribery and intrigue he induced the heir apparent to accept Tzu-ch'u as his proper heir. When the king of Ch'in died in 251, the heir apparent succeeded him as Hsiao-wen, but within a year he also died, thus enabling Tzu-ch'u to succeed him in turn in 250 as Chuang-hsiang. This reign too was cut short by Tzu-ch'u's death in 247, leaving the way open for Tzu-ch'u's son, Cheng, to succeed his father. (In accordance with Chinese convention, the reign officially started in 246, although Cheng actually mounted the throne immediately upon the death of his father, in the fifth month of the preceding year.)

Cheng's mother had originally been Lü Pu-wei's concubine, but Lü had reluctantly given her to Tzu-ch'u when the latter, attracted by her beauty, had asked for her. According to the *Shih-chi*, she was, unknown to Tzu-ch'u, already pregnant when she came to him. At the end of what the text describes as a "lengthy period," she gave birth to Cheng, whose real father was thus Lü Pu-wei – although, owing to the long pregnancy, he seemed to Tzu-ch'u and the world to be Tzu-ch'u's child. There is good reason (see Appendix 2) for believing that the sentence describing this unusual pregnancy is an interpolation added to the *Shih-chi* by an unknown person in

33 *SC* 85, p. 2505. Derk Bodde, in *Statesman, patriot, and general in ancient China: Three* Shih-chi *biographies of the Ch'in dynasty* (255–206 B.C.) (New Haven, 1940; rpt. New York, 1967), includes a translation and a discussion of *Shih-chi* 85 and other material relevant to Lü Pu-wei.

34 *Chan-kuo ts'e* 7 (Ch'in, 5), p. 275 (Crump, *Chan-kuo ts'e*, no. 109, p. 137).

order to slander the First Emperor and indicate his political as well as natal illegitimacy. What better way to do this than by portraying him not merely as a bastard, but as one fathered by a merchant (traditionally regarded by later Confucians as belonging to the lowest stratum of society)? The interpolation – and others of the same sort that arise later – has been eminently successful, for until recent times the story of the First Emperor's bastard birth was doubted by almost no one.

When Tzu-ch'u mounted the throne in 250, Lü Pu-wei became his chancellor, a post he continued to hold under Tzu-ch'u's successor until his own downfall in 237. Indicative of Lü Pu-wei's power was his ennoblement by Tzu-ch'u as a marquis, or noble (*hou*), allegedly receiving the revenues of 100,000 households. The incident shows that even at this late date the old system of internal fiefs continued to coexist with the new administrative system of commanderies and counties.

Although Lü Pu-wei, as a merchant, probably had little literary education himself, he is said to have been ashamed of Ch'in's cultural backwardness. No doubt too, like many self-made men, he wanted to gain prestige by making himself a patron of culture. His procedure was a common one among the powerful statesmen of his day: that of surrounding himself with a large entourage of gentlemen or scholars (his biography says three thousand). Some of these were asked by him to put their philosophical ideas into writing. Their efforts resulted in a unique anthology of late Chou philosophical thinking, the *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* (Lü's springs and autumns), probably compiled in 240.[35]

After Tzu-ch'u's death and the accession of the future First Emperor in 246, Lü Pu-wei resumed his sexual relations with the First Emperor's mother (who, it will be remembered, had been Lü's concubine before he gave her to Tzu-ch'u). Later, fearing that the young king would learn of this, Lü diverted the queen mother's interest by introducing to her a particularly licentious man, Lao Ai, who speedily replaced Lü in her affections. The affair became notorious, and when the king came of age in 238, he had Lao Ai and all his close relatives executed. At first Lü Pu-wei was spared, but in 237 he too was removed from office and subsequently banished to Shu (the modern Ch'eng-tu area of Szechwan). While on his way there in 235, Lü Pu-wei drank poison and died.

Already before Lü's death another and greater statesman had appeared on the scene, who was destined to become the major architect of Ch'in impe-

35 It has been translated into German by Richard Wilhelm, *Frühling und Herbst des Lü Bu We* (Jena, 1928).

rial policy after 221. This was Li Ssu, most notable of all Legalist statesmen, who came to Ch'in in 247 to seek a career after having studied, together with the major Legalist theoretician, Han Fei, under Hsün Ch'ing, the major Confucian thinker of the age.[36]

Li Ssu began his Ch'in career as a follower of Lü Pu-wei, through whom he gained access to the future First Emperor. During the next several years he advised the king on matters of secret diplomacy, but in 237 his career nearly came to an end when a decree was issued ordering the expulsion of all alien officials. It was then that Li Ssu presented his famous memorial to the throne, the eloquence of which persuaded the king to rescind the decree. Thereafter Li Ssu enjoyed a brilliant career, rising to the highest post in the empire, that of chancellor of the left, some time between 219 and 213. He continued in this position until his death in 208. At an earlier point, when his position was less secure, some sources accuse him of having engineered the death of his one-time fellow student, Han Fei, when the latter came to Ch'in on a diplomatic mission from Hann[37] in 233. However, the accounts of this event are confused, and Li Ssu's precise degree of involvement in the death is far from clear.

The decree ordering the expulsion of aliens is linked by Ssu-ma Ch'ien, almost surely wrongly, with an alleged plot by a "hydraulic engineer," Cheng Kuo, who came to Ch'in also from Hann, supposedly in order to induce Ch'in to exhaust its substance and energy on the building of an irrigation canal. The canal was already half finished when the "plot" was discovered; this discovery, according to Li Ssu's biography in the *Shih-chi*,[38] was the immediate cause for ordering the expulsion of aliens. However, the canal itself was thereafter completed. It had a length of about 120 kilometers (75 English miles or 300 Ch'in *li*) and ran in a line roughly parallel to and north of the Wei River, beginning north of Hsien-yang and extending northeasterly to the Lo River (a tributary of the Yellow River). The likelihood of this fanciful story is lessened by the fact that the canal was begun in 246, whereas the decree for the expulsion of aliens was issued in 237. The chronological correspondence between the latter event and Lao Ai's execution in 238, as well as Lü Pu-wei's dismissal in 237 (both were aliens), plausibly suggests that it was these events, not the building of the canal, that prompted the decree.

In any case, there is no doubt that the canal was of major economic

36 Li Ssu's life and achievements are the subject of Bodde, *China's first unifier*.

37 Hann lay to the east of Ch'in. The name of this state is written with a different character from that of Han, the dynasty that succeeded Ch'in; in order to avoid confusion, the name of the pre-imperial state is rendered here as Hann in place of the correct Han; see entries in the Glossary-Index.

38 *SC* 87, p. 2541 (Bodde, *China's first unifier*, pp. 15–21, with further discussion of same on pp. 59–62); and *SC* 29, p. 1408 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. III, pp. 523f.).

importance. With it should be mentioned another remarkable hydraulic undertaking, carried out at almost the same time. This was the network of irrigation canals crossing the Ch'eng-tu plain in Szechwan, made possible by the construction (ca. 250–ca. 230) of a massive rock cut for the diversion of water from the Min River. More will be said about the significance of these two achievements below.[39]

In 227, in a desperate effort to halt the quickening advance of the Ch'in military machine, the state of Yen (located in the present Peking area) sent an envoy, Ching K'o, to the Ch'in court, bearing as a token of submission a map of Yen territory and the head of a self-immolated renegade Ch'in general who had sought refuge in Yen. At the ensuing audience, Ching K'o seized a dagger which had been concealed within the map, and with it attacked the future First Emperor, whom he very nearly succeeded in assassinating before he himself was cut down. This assassination attempt was followed by two others, both likewise unsuccessful, about a decade later: one in 218, the other somewhere around the same time.[40]

But the main feature of the last few years of pre-imperial China is the monotonous recital of military campaigns and victories as the culminating fruits of over a century's work and organization. Curiously, the final instance of the enumeration of enemy casualties is the "cutting off" of heads of the men of Chao, allegedly 100,000, in 234. Thereafter the record shifts from human slaughter to territorial annexations: first successive eastward drives to conquer the states of Hann (230), Chao (228), and Wei (225), then Ch'u in the south (223), then again Yen in the northeast (222), and finally Ch'i in far eastern China in 221. With this last conquest, all China fell under Ch'in rule. The warring states had become the first Chinese empire.

REASONS FOR THE TRIUMPH

Before going on to recount the events of the empire, it seems appropriate to pause and consider what may have been the major reasons for the Ch'in triumph. Ever since the scholar-statesman Chia I (201–169) wrote his essay *Kuo-Ch'in lun* (The faults of Ch'in), Chinese scholars have been speculating on this subject. Most of the suggestions made here, therefore, are not new.

39 The technological aspects of the two constructions are described in detail in Joseph Needham, *Science and civilisation in China* (Cambridge, 1954–), Vol. IV, Part 3, pp. 285–98. For recent archeological discoveries which concern these works, see Wang Wen-ts'ai, "Tung-Han Li Ping shih-hsiang yü Tu-chiang-yen 'shui-tse,' " *WW*, 1974.7, 29–32; and Ch'in Chung-hsing, "Ch'in Cheng Kuo ch'ü ch'ü-shou i-chih tiao-ch'a chi," *WW*, 1974.7, 33–38.

40 For all three attempts, see the translation and discussion of Ching K'o's *SC* biography, *SC* 86, pp. 2526f., in Bodde, *Statesman*, pp. 23–52.

Geography

Ch'in's location in the far west of the Chinese *oikoumene* gave it isolation from the other states. To its east stood the great elbow of the Yellow River, flowing first from north to south and then making its abrupt turn to the east. South of the river the approaches to Ch'in were blocked by mountain chains pierced only by a very few strategic passes. Behind these barriers Ch'in could build up its strength before launching attacks on the other states. Chia I himself was the first to note this fact. "The territory of Ch'in," he wrote, "was protected by mountains and girdled by the [Yellow] River; this was what gave it its strength."[41]

Agriculture and irrigation

Ch'in's agricultural resources were enhanced by the building of the Cheng Kuo canal in the years following 246, as well as the irrigation system of the Ch'eng-tu plain about the same time. The latter receives only a single sentence in the *Shih-chi*'s treatise on rivers and canals (*SC* 29), perhaps because of its remoteness in the far southwest. Yet already its economic importance must have been great, and down to the present day it has continued to supply a never-failing flow of water to some five million people occupying an area of around two hundred square miles on the Ch'eng-tu plain. The significance of the Cheng Kuo canal, on the other hand, was fully recognized by Ssu-ma Ch'ien. Its construction, he writes, provided irrigation for approximately 465,000 English acres (some 40,000 *ch'ing*) of formerly alkaline land. "Thereupon the land within the passes became a fertile plain and there were no more bad years. Ch'in in this way became rich and powerful, and ended by conquering the various lords."[42]

Yet it would be wrong to give primary weight to these constructions as explanations for the Ch'in triumph. They came into existence less than a quarter of a century earlier, whereas Ch'in's movement toward empire had been apparent at least a century previously. Thus the two irrigation projects reinforced, but did not determine, the course of Ch'in history.

Military technology

Another theory would attribute Ch'in's military success to an advanced iron technology which, so it asserts, enabled Ch'in to equip its soldiers with

41 Quoted in *SC* 6, p. 277 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 220).
42 *SC* 29, p. 1408 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. III, p. 525).

wrought-iron swords superior to the bronze weapons generally used by its opponents. This theory, however, cannot be sustained by modern archeology. A tabulation of sixty-three archeological sites of Warring States date from which bronze and iron swords have been excavated indicates a ten-to-one preponderance of the former over the latter during that period (270 bronze swords as against only 27 made of iron). Moreover, none of the sites falls within the territory that belonged to Ch'in prior to the empire. Unfortunately, the archeological reports fail to indicate clearly whether any significant number of the recovered iron swords were hardened by forging. Generally, however, in early Chinese bronze and iron technology, casting rather than forging was apparently the preferred technique, although some implements may have undergone further processing designed to increase hardness and reduce brittleness. In summary – and this conclusion probably applies to other weapons as well as to swords – archeology, as of this writing, fails to support the thesis that Ch'in enjoyed some kind of metallurgical superiority over its rivals.[43]

The manly virtues

As a frontier state engaged in conflicts with non-Chinese "barbarians," Ch'in acquired a wealth of military experience which no doubt served it well when it directed its armies against the other states. Its people had a reputation for ruthlessness in war. Their exaltation of the manly virtues was exemplified by King Wu, a Ch'in ruler who delighted in surrounding himself with men of strength, and who died in 307 from an injury sustained while competing with another man in lifting a bronze tripod vessel.

Readiness to break with tradition

By the same token, Ch'in's relative freedom from the cultural traditions of the more purely "Chinese" states made it easier to institute radical innovations. The Confucian Hsün Ch'ing, following a visit to Ch'in made perhaps

43 See David N. Keightley, "Where all the swords have gone? Reflections on the unification of China," *Early China*, 2 (1976), 31–34. See also the successive rejoinders by William Trousdale, "Where all the swords have gone: Reflections on some questions raised by Professor Keightley," *Early China*, 3 (1977), 65–66; and then by Noel Barnard, "Did the swords exist?" *Early China*, 4 (1978–79), 60–65. For the theory of Ch'in's superiority in iron swords, see Sekino Takeshi, *Chūgoku kōkogaku kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1963), pp. 159–221. For the tabulation of archeological sites, see Noel Barnard and Satō Tamotsu, *Metallurgical remains of ancient China* (Tokyo, 1975), p. 112 and Maps 6c and 6d. These references indicate that during the Former Han period, bronze swords still outnumbered those of iron (350 recovered bronze examples as against 270 of iron); only during the Later Han did the balance swing decisively in favor of iron (103 iron swords as against 35 of bronze).

around 264, was compelled to admit that its people were "simple and unsophisticated" and stood in proper awe of their officials; also that the latter performed their tasks conscientiously, without displaying partiality or forming cliques. Having said this, however, he expressed disquiet at the almost complete absence of literati (*ju*) in the state. By these he no doubt meant the Confucian-minded literati, whom he regarded as especially versed in the old mores. Their absence, he said, might well lead Ch'in to ultimate disaster.[44]

Readiness to employ alien talent

A corollary factor was Ch'in's readiness, precisely because of its cultural backwardness, to recruit talent wherever it could be found. This Ch'in did to an extent unequaled by any other state. One of the ranks of honor instituted by Shang Yang was that of alien dignitary (*k'o ch'ing*), conferred on statesmen from abroad who achieved high position (the earliest recorded instance comes in 289). Notables of alien origin (not all of whom necessarily held this title) include himself, Lü Pu-wei, and Li Ssu, as well as many other officials not mentioned in these pages.[45] Indeed, the only field of employment in which Ch'in seems to have been self-sufficient was that of military generals.[46]

Longevity of rulers

Ch'in was fortunate in being ruled for a century and a half by a succession of kings who combined competence with exceptional longevity, thus providing political continuity and stability; only twice was the sequence broken by short-lived rulers whose combined reigns lasted a mere eight years. The longevity sequence begins with Duke Hsiao, who ruled for twenty-four years (361–338) and under whom Shang Yang held office; then comes King Hui-wen, twenty-seven years (337–311); then the four-year reign of King Wu (310–307), cut short by his death in a weight-lift-

44 Hsün Ch'ing's thinly concealed admiration for Ch'in, remarkable as coming from a Confucian, occurs in the *Hsün-tzu*, 16, p. 217 (Bodde, *China's first unifier*, pp. 9–10). Despite Hsün Ch'ing's reservations, Confucian scholars and ideas were by no means totally absent under the empire (see pp. 75f. below).

45 Li Ssu, in his throne memorial of 237 opposing the edict for the expulsion of aliens, mentions seven men of alien origin, besides Shang Yang himself, who had served with excellent results under four previous Ch'in rulers. See *SC* 87, p. 2541f. (Bodde, *China's first unifier*, pp. 15–17). Li Ssu's list could be supplemented.

46 Ch'in's three most famous generals were Po Ch'i (d. 257), Wang Chien (d. after 221), and Meng T'ien (d. 210), all of whom were born in Ch'in, although Meng T'ien's grandfather, himself a noted general, had come to Ch'in from Ch'i.

ing contest; then Chao-hsiang, fifty-six years (306–251); then the combined four-year interlude of Hsiao-wen (250) and Chuang-hsiang (250–247); and finally the thirty-seven year reign of Cheng, king and later emperor (246–210). Yet the importance of this factor should not be overstressed, for longevity obviously does not always mean competence. For example, when the Chou dynasty at last came to an end in 256, Chao-hsiang, the Ch'in ruler responsible, was in the fifty-first year of his reign, but the Chou ruler himself, Nan, had already sat on his throne no less than fifty-nine years (314–256).

Administrative factors

Obviously, then, the more decisive factors were the programs of administrative efficiency, agricultural reform, and single-minded pursuit of political and military power which Shang Yang had bequeathed to Ch'in. So greatly does this point transcend all others in importance that it requires further comment, in addition to the account of Shang Yang's reforms given above (pp. 34f.).

The remarks that follow[47] are based on the laws and other legal texts that were excavated in 1975 at Shui-hu-ti, a tiny place in modern Yün-meng hsien (some forty-five miles northwest of Wuhan, Hupei, in central China). They come from the grave of a Ch'in provincial official who probably lived from 262 to 217, and who had held office in what was then Ch'in's Nan commandery. The texts consist in part of named statutes (*lü*) which must have belonged to the Ch'in code; in part of legal catechisms which explain laws and legal procedures by means of questions and answers; and in part of hypothetical "patterns" formulated as guides to officials for carrying out legal procedures (among them the questioning of suspects, investigation of a death by hanging, a father's denunciation of a son, a report on improper sex relations).

The named statutes deal mostly with administrative law and bear such titles as Arable Land, Stables and Parks, Granaries, and so on for a total of eighteen headings. The unnamed legal catechisms, though likewise concerned in good part with administrative law, fortunately touch on a few criminal topics as well, such as robbery, homicide, affrays, and sexual offenses. Internal evidence indicates that the materials do predate the unifi-

47 The texts on which these remarks are based will be found in *Shui-hu-ti Ch'in-mu chu-chien*, ed. Shui-hu-ti Ch'in-mu chu-chien cheng-li hsiao-tsu (Peking, 1978), pp. 15, 24–26, 32, 43, 56, 94, 104–05, 113–14, 142–43, 150, 154, 173, 225, 263. For an annotated edition of these texts, see A. F. P. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law: An annotated translation of the Ch'in legal and administrative rules of the 3rd century* B.C. *discovered in Yün-meng Prefecture, Hu-pei Province in 1975* (Leiden, 1985).

cation of 221, though in many cases, perhaps, by only a half century or less. In basic content and spirit, however, it seems likely that much of the material had its origin in the time of Shang Yang.

Ch'in's reputation for Draconian punishments is not exactly controverted by these laws, but neither is it strikingly affirmed. Of course, this may be due partly to the incompleteness of the laws and to the fact that so many of them are administrative rather than criminal. Capital punishment is mentioned, but not very frequently, and the kinds of offenses for which it is stipulated are those that might be expected: incest, for example, between the children of different fathers but the same mother, or the act of "one who praises the enemy so as to bring fear to the hearts of the multitude." There are three or four references to the mutilating punishments of cutting off the left foot or the nose, but much more common are varying degrees of forced labor.

For violations of the administrative laws, the commonest punishments are fines (unlike the situation in later Chinese law). Ch'in's intensely military atmosphere is indicated by the fact that most fines are calculated in terms of one or (very rarely) two coats of armor (*chia*) and, on a lower level, one or two shields (*tun*); still lesser fines are payable in cash coins (*ch'ien*). The lowest punishment appears to be that of *sui*, a word which probably signifies "reprimand"; presumably such a reprimand would be entered on the career record of the functionary receiving it. Quite a number of statutes merely say that commission of the stated offense will result in punishment, without specifying what the punishment is; still others make no mention of punishment at all and are merely hortatory ("such-and-such must be done"). In this respect the Ch'in laws differ considerably from the more mature codes of later dynasties (that of T'ang, A.D. 653, and later), in which each violation calls for a specific punishment.

Shang Yang's principle of group responsibility is not emphasized in these admittedly far from complete laws. One law, to be sure, imposes particularly heavy punishment for group robbery, but it is group robbery of a very special sort: one in which functionaries, who are referred to in the text as "robber-destroyers" (apparently a kind of police), abandon their normal duties and engage in joint robbery. The robbery of a mere cash coin, when committed by a group of five such persons, entails amputation of the left foot for each participant, followed by tattooing and forced labor. By contrast, robbery of the very large sum of 660 cash coins or more, if committed by fewer than five robber-destroyers, entails the next lower penalty of cutting off the nose followed by tattooing and forced labor. If the sum taken ranges between 220 and 659 cash, the penalty is further reduced to forced labor without nose amputation, and for a sum from one to 219 cash,

it becomes exile without forced labor. If an ordinary individual commits a very minor theft involving no violence, such as stealing somebody's mulberry leaves to a value of less than one cash coin, the penalty is thirty days of labor service.

Even the least of these penalties no doubt seems outrageous from a modern point of view, but hardly more so, perhaps, than those found in many other lands and times. (In England before 1818, for example, death was the penalty for stealing from a shop goods valued at five shillings.)

Among the administrative laws, some call for what seems to be an unreasonable degree of personal (not group) responsibility, as in the case of a regulation about presumably government-owned cattle: "If, among ten adult cows, six fail to have calves, the overseer and his assistant are each to be fined one shield." For the most part, however, the laws do not seem unreasonable, as for example a statute under Stables and Parks: "If an iron implement, on being borrowed, proves so worn that its ruination becomes unavoidable, this fact is to be reported in writing, and no blame is to be attached when it is received back."

Impressive is the insistence on quantitative exactitude, as found in a statute specifying the dimensions for the pieces of hemp cloth which, together with metal coins, were issued by the Ch'in government as media of exchange:

The [standard] length for the cloth (*pu*) is eight feet [approx. 1.85 m]. Its width is two feet five inches [approx. 58 cm]. If the cloth is of poor quality, or its width and length are not according to standard, it is not to circulate.

Again, two successive statutes on weights and measures impose fines of a coat of armor or a shield on those officials whose sets of standard weights or cubic measures are inaccurate by amounts variously ranging from under 7 percent for cubic measures to less than 1 percent for weights. Equally impressive is the insistence on fixed routine and exactitude in administrative procedure:

When a request is to be made about some matter, it must be done in writing. There can be no oral requesting, nor can it be entrusted [to a third person]. (Miscellaneous statutes of the metropolitan superintendent)

When documents are transmitted or received, the month, day and time of day of their sending and arrival must be recorded, so as to expedite a reply. (On the transmission of documents)[48]

48 Evidence of administrative documents dating from a century or two later shows that this procedure was certainly carried out during Ch'in's successor dynasty of Han; see Michael Loewe, *Records of Han administration* (Cambridge, 1967), Vol. I, pp. 39f.

The importance of agricultural production and of conserving natural resources is recognized in several statutes. One of these directs individual counties to maintain records covering the planting and growing of grain crops. These records are to register the amounts of precipitation and the acreage of cropland affected, as well as the occurrence and consequences of droughts, hurricanes, floods, insect pests, and other disasters. For a given year, all such reports are to be sent by each county to the Ch'in capital, using runner or post horse, so as to reach the capital before the end of the eighth month. Another statute specifies how much seed is to be used for planting different kinds of grain, pulses, and textile crops. Still a third statute seems to say, despite linguistic uncertainties, that beginning in the second spring month and apparently continuing in most instances through the summer, the cutting of wood in forests, damming up of waters, taking of birds' nests, poisoning of fish, and setting out of traps and nets are all forbidden. The one clearly allowed exception is the cutting of wood to make a coffin for a newly deceased person (an interesting concession to traditional family ethics, though possibly also partially inspired by considerations of hygiene).

Space does not permit further analysis of these legal texts, which, despite many problems of style and terminology, are potentially capable, among other things, of yielding valuable information about the legal status of different social groups. Perhaps, however, what has been cited suffices to demonstrate the functioning of principles which contributed in a major way to the Ch'in triumph: insistence on efficiency, precision, and fixed routine in administrative procedure; emphasis on the exact quantification of data; and attention to the improvement of agricultural production and conserving of natural resources.

THE CH'IN EMPIRE: REFORMS, ACHIEVEMENTS, EXCESSES (221–210 B.C.)

The major events between 221 and the death of the First Emperor in 210 will be described under nine headings. Although most of these are dated under particular years (the majority under 221), it is evident that several, such as the building of roads, walls, and palaces, must have continued for a number of years after their first mention. The name of the First Emperor is understandably attached to most of them, yet in several vital cases it can be demonstrated that their real author was the emperor's chancellor, Li Ssu. In yet other cases, such as the military campaigns and the building of roads and walls, they were necessarily the work of military men, of whom the

most notable during this decade was Meng T'ien. The reforms begin with several acts of a political nature.[49]

From king (wang) *to emperor* (huang-ti)

As soon as the empire had been united, the first recorded act of the Ch'in ruler was to ask his ministers to devise a title other than *wang* (king) which would better express his new status as sole reigning monarch, as opposed to the many rulers who had hitherto been known as *wang*. From the resulting suggestions he accepted the word *huang* and combined it with another of his own choosing, *ti*. The resulting binome, *huang-ti*, may be roughly translated as "august emperor." At the same time he abolished the traditional practice whereby a deceased ruler became known to history by whatever posthumous title was given him by his successor. Instead, so the monarch declared, he himself would rule as Shih-huang-ti, "First August Emperor," and his descendants would then follow as "August Emperor of the Second Generation," "Third Generation," and so unto a thousand and ten thousand generations.

In this decree the First Emperor was uttering one of the innumerable ironies of history, as his dynasty was to end with the second generation. However, his choice of title was felicitous, either in its full form of *huang-ti*, or as often abbreviated, *ti*; both forms continue in use today as the standard Chinese equivalents for emperor.

Especially felicitous was the word *ti*, because it was a term permeated with numinous associations going back to the dawn of history. In Shang times it had been the name of a major deity (or deities), possibly constituting the high ancestor (or ancestors) of the Shang ruling house. During the Ch'in and even the Former Han dynasties, the official cults of state were directed toward serving powers who were described as *ti*.[50] In mid-Chou times a series of legendary rulers, awesomely regarded as the creators of early Chinese civilization, had begun to be referred to as *ti*. Then in the third century, when the title of *wang* had lost its prestige owing to the declining fortunes of the Chou kings, certain state rulers tried to take the title of *ti* for themselves in order to symbolize their imperial aspirations.

The first such attempt came in 288, when the king of Ch'in and the king of Ch'i, respectively, proposed to call themselves the *ti* of the West and the *ti* of the East. Political pressure from outside speedily caused them

49 This and most of the topics that follow are also discussed in Bodde, *China's first unifier*, Chaps. 6–9.

50 For the maintenance of the imperial cult of *ti* and the change to that of *t'ien*, see Michael Loewe, *Crisis and conflict in Han China* (London, 1974), Chap. 5; and Chapter 12 below, pp. 661f.

to renounce these titles. Two further attempts, both involving the king of Ch'in, took place in 286 and 257, but they too failed. Thus when the First Emperor called himself *ti* in 221, he was using a word which by then had acquired a strong political coloration, yet retained potent associations with the gods and sages of antiquity. It fittingly symbolized a human political achievement which to him and probably to his subjects must have seemed almost superhuman.

The political unification

Of greater practical importance was the extension to "all-under-heaven," again in 221, of a new system of centralized administration. The affair started when the chancellor Wang Kuan, who was then Li Ssu's superior, urged the First Emperor to place the territories of the more distant former states in the hands of sons of the imperial Ch'in house – in other words, to reinstate the system of feudal investiture which the Chou inherited when it had conquered the Shang some eight centuries earlier. In this way, it was argued, these territories could be more easily ruled.

Li Ssu courageously replied that the same policy, when instituted by Chou, had proved to be a political disaster. Relatives of the Chou house, once they had received their lands, had soon become estranged and gone to war with one another, while the Son of Heaven had proved powerless to prevent them: "The establishment of feudal lords (*chu hou*) would not be advantageous."

The First Emperor sided with Li Ssu, and the result was the division of the entire empire into thirty-six commanderies each subdivided in turn into an unknown number of counties. For each commandery there was an administrative triumvirate, consisting of a (civil) governor (*shou*), a (military) commander (*wei*), and an imperial inspector (*chien yü-shih*), who apparently acted as the immediate representative of the emperor on the commandery level. The counties were administered by magistrates who, depending upon the sizes of their counties, were known either as *ling* (for large counties) or *chang* (for smaller ones). All these officials were centrally appointed, with fixed salaries. Their posts were not hereditary, and they were subject to recall at any time. No attempt will be made to go into further detail about the Ch'in administrative system because the Han system, which directly derived from it, is so much better known and will be described in Chapters 7 and 8.

As indicated earlier, the commandery/county system was neither new with the empire, nor had it originated in Ch'in. What was crucial about the 221 reform, however, was its unequivocal rejection of the idea of

reestablishing separate kingdoms or principalities (*kuo*), with the indirect rule that this necessarily entailed, and its decision instead to universalize the commandery/county system, thus providing the instruments for a uniformly centralized jurisdiction over all parts of the empire. The system was perpetuated in Han times, though as will be described in Chapter 2, with a certain degree of compromise, since a number of kingdoms, with severely circumscribed powers, were then allowed to coexist with a much larger number of commanderies. Thereafter, but again with minor modifications, the system became the norm for later dynasties, eventually evolving into that of provinces (*sheng*) and counties (*hsien*) still current today.

The Ch'in commandery was a good deal smaller than the modern province, though just how many commanderies existed at the end of the Ch'in dynasty and which ones they were has been the subject of considerable controversy. Probably four and possibly as many as half a dozen were added by 210 to the original thirty-six of 221. These figures compare with the eighty-three commanderies which existed at the time of the Han census in A.D. 2 (when the empire was considerably larger than that of Ch'in, but also when twenty kingdoms coexisted with the commanderies) and with the standard eighteen provinces of late Ch'ing times (the nineteenth century). On the other hand, the number of counties remained remarkably constant from beginning to end. A rough estimate suggests a figure of something like one thousand during the Ch'in (for which no actual statistics are available),[51] compared with around 1,314 in A.D. 2; 1,381 at the very end of the Ch'ing dynasty in 1911; and 1,479 in 1972 under the People's Republic of China (excluding Sinkiang, Tibet, and Yunnan).

Imposition of the commandery/county system meant that something had to be done about the former state rulers and their subordinate aristocrats and officials. The problem was solved by moving "the powerful and rich people of the empire, amounting to 120,000 families," away from their original homes to Hsien-yang, where new palaces were built for them and where they could be kept under the surveillance of the central government. Presumably, though the *Shih chi* does not tell us, these people were adequately supplied with government stipends to replace their former revenues. The policy was effective as long as the dynasty lasted. But when it collapsed, some of the former ruling houses reestablished themselves as political contenders during the civil war that followed. The only questionable point is the suspiciously large and round figure of 120,000 families. This problem is considered further in the discussion of statistics in Appendix 3.

51 The estimate comes from Yen Keng-wang, *Chung-kuo ti-fang hsing-cheng chih-tu shih*, Part 1, *Ch'in Han ti-fang hsing-cheng chih-tu* (Taipei, 1961), p. 35.

The mass transfer of people to the capital was accompanied by a mass destruction of armaments. Weapons were collected throughout the empire and brought to Hsien-yang, where they were melted and cast into bells, bell supports, and twelve colossal human statues, each said to weigh nearly twenty-nine English tons (one thousand *shih*), which were set up within the Ch'in palace enclosure. According to later writings, these earliest examples of Chinese monumental sculpture were guardian figures, perhaps dressed in the garb of "barbarians," which survived into late Han times, when the warlord Tung Cho (d. A.D. 192) destroyed ten of them; the remaining two were then taken away and finally melted down during the fourth century A.D.[52]

Complementing the destruction of arms and removal of the aristocracy was the empire-wide leveling of city walls and other obstructions of military importance. An inscription of 215 erected on Mt. Chieh-shih (see p. 68 below) has this to say about the First Emperor:

> He has been the first to achieve a single great peace.
> He has demolished the inner and outer walls of cities.
> He has cut through the embankments of rivers.
> He has levelled the bulwarks at mountain defiles.[53]

The cultural unification

Less spectacular than the political measures, but in its way equally important, was the unification of script. This is also recorded under the year 221 and attributed directly to Li Ssu: "He . . . equalized . . . the written characters and made them universal throughout the empire." He is, in fact, said to have been the author of a text, now lost, which supposedly embodied the results of the reform. The claim is unlikely, however, because it is quite improbable that such a high official as Li Ssu could have found the time to carry out the details of the reform himself. Probably he conceived the idea and then placed its execution in the hands of a board of scholars.

In what did the reform consist? The script of the early Chou dynasty, known as the Large Seal script, had undergone chronological changes in its orthography and possibly regional changes as well, especially with the proliferation of local literatures during the late Chou centuries. In other

52 See Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 134 note 1. However, Kamada Shigeo, *Shin Kan seiji seido no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1962), pp. 89–92, believes that the twelve figures represented stars surrounding the North Star, and that they were placed in a temple dedicated to the North Star that was built in 220.

53 As pointed out by Yang K'uan, *Ch'in Shih-huang* (Shanghai, 1956), p. 76, this surely does not mean the indiscriminate destruction of *all* dikes and dams, an act which would have resulted in disastrous floods, but only of those that had been erected as defensive barriers along the banks of rivers (or, it might be added, that obstructed the free flow of traffic on the rivers themselves).

words, the same characters had come to be written differently in different times and perhaps regions. Li Ssu's unification of the script may be summarized under three heads: (1) simplification and rationalization of the complex and chronologically diversified Large Seal forms of characters, reducing them to what came to be known as the Small Seal script; (2) standardization of regional variants into a single system, probably (though this is difficult to assess with any certainty) based at least in part on the forms standard in Ch'in; (3) universalization of this system throughout China. Both this change and the subsequent further simplification of script which took place in Han times may conceivably have been stimulated in part by the introduction of new implements and materials for writing and the fast-growing need for more documents as the work of government became more intensive.

Technically speaking, the Ch'in reform apparently involved not only a mere simplification of some characters, but also basic structural alterations of others and the suppression of still others. In general, characters consisting of single graphic elements (i.e., simple pictographs) seem to have been transmitted to later times with the least change. Characters consisting of multi-element combinations were apparently much more likely to be severely modified or even to be replaced by quite different multi-element combinations. A major reason for such drastic changes was very possibly the failure by Ch'in times of graphic elements, which had originally been used in the characters for their phonetic values, to represent adequately the phonetic changes which had by then occurred in the spoken language. Besides all this, as many as 25 percent of the pre-Ch'in characters may have been totally suppressed by the Ch'in reformers for various reasons (such as being obsolete place names or personal names, names of obsolete utensils, etc.), leaving no descendants in later times.[54]

The Ch'in reform was an indispensable basis for the further orthographic simplification that gradually evolved in Han times, resulting in the script which thereafter was to remain standard until it too, in recent decades, gave way to the "abbreviated characters" now in use in the People's Republic of China. Without the Ch'in reform, it is conceivable that several regionally different orthographies might have come into permanent existence. And had this happened, it is inconceivable that China's political unity could long have survived. Of all the cultural forces that have made

54 For these technical details, see Noel Barnard, "The nature of the Ch'in 'reform of the script' as reflected in archaeological documents excavated under conditions of control," in *Ancient China: Studies in early civilization*, ed. David T. Roy and Tsuen-hsuin Tsien (Hong Kong, 1978), pp. 181–213. The present writer is much indebted to Dr. Barnard for very kindly making his illuminating study available prior to publication.

for political as well as cultural unity, there is little question that the uniformity of the written language (in contrast to the diversity of the spoken dialects) has been more influential than any other.

Legal and economic measures

In 221 the Ch'in law code, probably going back in essential features to Shang Yang, was made standard for the entire empire. When probable excerpts from this code were cited above, it was pointed out that most of them deal with administrative rather than penal matters. Traditionally, however, Shang Yang's law is said to have embodied two main principles: (1) mutual responsibility for wrongdoing, especially among relatives and within the units of five and ten families into which Shang Yang divided the population; (2) severity of punishment sufficient to deter people from wrongdoing. These principles are affirmed by what is said in the treatise on law in the *Han shu*:[55]

> Ch'in put together Shang Yang's laws of mutual responsibility and created [under him] the execution of kindred to the third degree [parents, brothers, wife and children, but the term is somewhat ambiguous]. In addition to bodily mutilation and capital punishment, there were the punishments of chiseling the crown, extracting ribs, and boiling in a cauldron.

What is meant by "chiseling the crown" and "extracting ribs" is uncertain, because no actual instances occur either in the historical sources or the excavated legal materials, although the latter refer to other kinds of mutilating punishments (see p. 50 above). Among the various kinds of capital punishment that are reported in the sources, the most common was beheading (either with or without public exposure of the corpse). The punishments imposed for a very few extremely heinous crimes (treason, rebellion, "impiety," and the like) could include, besides boiling in a cauldron, such varieties as cutting in two at the waist, tearing apart by chariots, and execution preceded by horrible mutilations (the five punishments). It should be stressed that such terrible punishments were by no means peculiar to Ch'in. Tearing apart by chariots, for example, is recorded in the eastern state of Ch'i in 694, and boiling in a cauldron in the same state around the mid-fourth century. Even in Han times, after the formal abolition of the mutilating punishments in 167 B.C., boiling in a cauldron and cutting in two at the waist continued to be occasionally applied, as did castration as a commutation of the death penalty.

55 A modified version of the translation made by A. F. P. Hulsewé in his *Remnants of Han law* (Leiden, 1955), p. 332.

Very little is known about economic developments during the empire. Both the First Emperor and Li Ssu verbally endorsed the Legalist policy of encouraging agriculture and repressing trade. However, aside from hints in the excavated legal materials (see p. 49 above), the sources provide few specific examples of this policy. In 216, according to an enigmatic statement found not in the *Shih-chi* text itself, but in the remarks there of a commentator of the fourth and fifth century A.D., "the common people were made to evaluate their own agricultural land." In other words, they were called upon to report the value of their land to the authorities for taxation purposes. This statement, if it is accurate and has been correctly interpreted, is taken to mean that by this time the private ownership of land had become an established fact throughout the empire.[56]

The moving of large numbers of people to colonize new frontier areas is reported several times during the empire, and has been interpreted as indicative of government interest in expanding agricultural resources. Because of its military associations, however, it will be discussed here in connection with conquests and colonizations. What seems to be an example of deliberate antimercantilism is an episode of 214, when it is recorded that merchants were among several groups deported by the government to participate in the conquest and occupation of areas in the far south of China.

The paucity of economic information in the *Shih-chi*'s sixth chapter has often induced historians to look elsewhere for scraps of information; for example, at the statements of Han statesmen and scholars. These, however, because they are so often marked by evident anti-Ch'in bias, should be approached only with extreme caution.[57]

Other standardizations

Shang Yang's interest in quantitative exactitude has already been noted, as has the similar interest evidenced by the excavated legal materials. It is no surprise, therefore, that along with law and writing, weights and measures were also standardized throughout the empire in 221. That they were the same in size, or virtually the same, as those of Shang Yang's day is shown by the surviving *sheng* or pint measure to which attention has already been drawn (see p. 38). Besides the original inscription on the side of this vessel

56 See Hsü Kuang's note to *SC* 6, p. 251. The meaning of the phrase *tzu-shih*, lit. "self-evaluate," though unclear by itself, becomes understandable when compared with similar phrases used to describe similar evaluations or self-assessments reported for many periods from the Han through the Sung. See Hiranaka, *Chūgoku kodai no densei to zeihō*, pp. 42–62.

57 Typical is the statement by the Han Confucian Tung Chung-shu, made about 100 B.C., which asserts quite arbitrarily that the annual exactions of frontier military service and public labor under the Ch'in were "thirty times more than in antiquity" (*HS* 24A, p. 1137 [Swann, *Food and money*, p. 182]), and that its land and poll taxes were twenty times greater.

recording Shang Yang's name and a date corresponding to 344, the vessel bears an added inscription on its base which is dated 221 and enunciates the First Emperor's policy of making measures standard. This is only one of several weights and measures of the Ch'in empire that have been found widely distributed – in one case, at least, as far away as modern Kirin province in Manchuria, which in Ch'in times probably lay outside the political confines of the empire.

Another standardization was that of metal currency. This reform does not go back as far as Shang Yang, because only in 336, two years after his death, does the *Shih-chi* record Ch'in as having first circulated metal coins. At this time and earlier, coins of various sizes, shapes, and denominations had been current in different states, among them knife-shaped coins, shovel-shaped coins and coins shaped like small cowrie shells. In Ch'in itself the newly issued currency consisted of the familiar circular cash coin with the square central hole, the shape that was to remain standard for Chinese coins for the next two thousand years. Here is the way the treatise on food and commodities in the *Han shu* describes the Ch'in reform:[58]

When Ch'in united the world, it made two kinds of currency: that of yellow gold, which was called *i* and was currency of the higher class; and that of bronze, which was similar in quality to the coins of Chou, but bore an inscription saying, "Half Ounce," and was equal in weight to its inscription. With this step, such things as pearls, jade, tortoise shell, cowry shells, silver and tin became objects [only] for decoration and precious treasures, and were not used for money.

Finally, mention should be made of a reform with a curiously modern touch. This was the establishment in 221 of a standard gauge for vehicles, no doubt so that their wheels might fit the cart ruts of roads throughout the empire. The significance of this reform will be apparent to anyone acquainted with the deeply eroded roads which, in large areas of northwest China, cut across thick deposits of friable loess soil. It has been calculated that the gauge of chariot wheels, beginning in Shang times, gradually narrowed from 7.07 modern English feet to 5.41 feet or less during the Warring States, and finally to 4.92 feet during the Former Han (as shown by excavations at the main city gate of the contemporary capital, Ch'ang-an). This last figure comes close to the standard track gauge of 4.71 feet used on modern railroads. (In the Western classical world the gauges of vehicles tended in general to be narrower. Measurements of ruts on some of the roads of Roman Britain, for example, reveal gauges ranging between 4.50 and 4.83 feet.)[59]

58 *HS* 24B, p. 1152 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 228–29, modified).
59 See Needham, *Science and civilisation*, Vol. IV, Part 3, pp. 5–6 note d.

Roads, walls, palaces[60]

Traditionally, in pre-imperial China, corvée labor performed by peasants had been the major means for constructing city walls, roads, canals, palaces, and other public works; at the same time, peasants had also been liable for military service. Following the Ch'in unification, it became possible to organize such labor service on a vastly larger scale. Furthermore, the services of the peasants were complemented by the extensive use of convicts and other disfavored groups for labor and for military purposes. All of this resulted in the massive constructions, military campaigns, and colonizations which will be described below.

Beginning in 220, a series of imperial highways, known as speedways (*ch'ih-tao*), were built in a large arc radiating from Hsien-yang toward the north, northeast, east, and southeast; few major roads went very far west because of Hsien-yang's location near the western edge of the empire. According to a later source, these highways were 50 Chinese double paces (*pu*) wide, with trees planted along the sides at intervals of 30 Chinese feet. The former figure is equivalent to approximately 70 meters, which is obviously far too wide and may be the result of a textual error. (The problem is discussed further in Appendix 3.)

Beginning in 212, the empire's most important general, Meng T'ien, was ordered to construct a major north-south highway known as the Straight Road (*chih-tao*). It began not far north of Hsien-yang, ar rhe emperor's summer palace at Yün-yang, from which it proceeded northward into the Ordos desert, then crossed the northern loop of the Yellow River, and finally ended at Chiu-yüan (the modern Wu-yüan, some one hundred miles west of Pao-t'ou in Inner Mongolia), a distance of around 800 kilometers (500 English miles or 1,800 Ch'in *li*). The road was not yet finished when the First Emperor died in 210. Remnants of it survive today, paralleled in many places by a modern road which follows approximately the same route. Along its southern part, where the terrain is mountainous, the old road is generally only about 5 meters wide, but on the level grasslands to the north it occasionally reaches a width of 24 meters.[61]

A necessarily very rough estimate of the lengths of the Ch'in imperial highways yields a total figure of some 6,800 kilometers (4,250 miles). This compares with Gibbon's estimate of 3,740 miles (5,984 km) as the total length of the Roman road system extending (ca. A.D. 150) from the wall of

60 This section makes extensive use of Needham, *Science and civilisation*, Vol. IV, Part 3, pp. 1–16, 47–55, in respect to roads and the Great Wall.

61 For an account of the road, accompanied by some rather poor photographs, see Shih Nien-hai, "Ch'in Shih-huang chih-tao i-chi ti t'an-so," *WW*, 1975.10, 44–54.

Antoninus in Scotland to Rome and thence to Jerusalem. During the Han dynasty, with the expansion of empire, the Ch'in road system was considerably enlarged, but from the third century A.D. onward, in China and Rome alike, the roads fell into decay. In China, aside from political factors, this was probably due in part to the great development of waterways, especially in central China.

Far more extraordinary, of course, was the building of the Great Wall (*ch'ang ch'eng*, lit. "long wall"). Like the Straight Road, this was the achievement of Meng T'ien. Beginning in 221, for more than ten years he called on a host of 300,000 men with which he not only campaigned against the Jung and Ti barbarians in the north, but at the same time built the Great Wall as well as the Straight Road.[62] Considering the colossal nature of the wall, the *Shih-chi*'s account (in its biography of Meng T'ien) is casual and brief to an extreme:[63]

> He . . . built a Great Wall, constructing its defiles and passes in accordance with the configurations of the terrain. It started at Lin-t'ao and extended to Liao-tung, reaching a distance of more than ten thousand *li*. After crossing the [Yellow] River, it wound northward, touching the Yang mountains.

The lack of any detailed accounts of Meng T'ien's wall in other early sources leaves it uncertain whether the wall did in fact really extend uninterruptedly for more than ten thousand *li* (approximately 4,100 kilometers or 2,600 English miles), as here asserted. Two further considerations, however, deserve mention. One is that the Great Wall which exists today (in its main extension, not its several loops) is estimated to have an overall length of 3,440 kilometers or 2,150 miles. This is substantially less, of course, than the alleged length of the Meng T'ien wall. The second consideration is that the *Shih-chi*'s key word for this allegation is *wan*, "myriad." This happens to be a word sometimes occurring elsewhere in the *Shih-chi*, as well as in other early texts, in contexts that make it evident the word is being used in a figurative rather than a literal sense. In such passages, *wan* no longer seems to be a designation for a precise number. Instead, it is to be understood as a symbol, intended only to designate a very large, but quite indefinite, number or quantity. Examples of such usage are discussed in Appendix 3. To them, we believe, should be added the *wan* that appears in the present *Shih-chi* text.

62 Meng T'ien's biography, in *SC*, 88 is translated and discussed in Bodde, *Statesman*, pp. 53–67. In the *Shih-chi*'s sixth chapter the wall is mentioned only once (*SC* 6, p. 253 [Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 169]), under the year 213, but it is self-evident that its construction must have required a far longer period.

63 *SC* 88, p. 2565 (Bodde, *Statesman*, p. 54). Lin-t'ao was the present Min-hsien, Kansu, some 300 miles west of Sian. Liao-tung is on the coast of southern Manchuria, a little west of Korea. The Yang Mountains are north of Pao-t'ou in Inner Mongolia.

The net conclusion to which this leads – which seems very plausible though far from absolute – is that the wall built by Meng T'ien was probably shorter than the *Shih-chi*'s mention of "more than ten thousand *li*" would seem to indicate. More than this we believe it unwise to speculate, in the absence of adequate data. Perhaps archeology will some day come to the rescue.

Irrespective of precise length, however, it seems safe to say that the logistics of building such an extended fortification must have been vastly greater that those involved in building a pyramid, dam, or other stationary monumental structure. For as the wall advances, the focus of its building activity constantly changes and the lines of supply become longer. Moreover, unlike a road under construction, a wall is a very imperfect means for transporting materials to itself. In the case of the Great Wall, conditions were made especially difficult by the long stretches of mountains and semi-desert it traversed, the sparse populations of these areas, and the frigid winter climate. For every man whom Meng T'ien could put to work at the scene of actual construction, dozens must have been needed to build approaching roads and to transport supplies. The death toll too must have been enormous. These seem quite reasonable assumptions, despite the complete absence of statistics and granted the fact that large parts of the wall were built of *terre pisé* (tamped earth), which meant that much of its construction material was obtainable *in situ*. Meng T'ien's 300,000 men, unlike the figures that have been encountered earlier, seem in no way unreasonable for this and his several other simultaneous tasks.

As shown in Map 2, the Ch'in wall ran a good deal farther north than the walls now extant, which date principally from the Ming dynasty and include much stone construction. Meng T'ien's wall could not possibly have been built within ten years if it had not been to some extent the consolidation of earlier walls built by several states along their northern frontiers a century or more before. These, enumerated roughly from west to east, included a wall built by Ch'in itself somewhere around 300, then a Wei wall of 353, then one built by Chao around 300, and finally a Yen wall of around 290 which led down to the lower Liao valley in Manchuria. Still other walls running in other directions had also been built at various times by Wei, Ch'i, and Ch'u to protect themselves. There seems little doubt that the Chinese, throughout their history, have been more wall-minded than any other people. To what extent the Great Wall achieved its assumed purpose of separating the sedentary agrarian Chinese from the pastoral barbarians beyond has long been a matter of controversy.

Finally, a word should be added about the building of palaces. In 221, when the empire's 120,000 rich and powerful families are said to have been

moved to Hsien-yang, it is also said that carefully copied reproductions of their original dwellings were built over a distance of many miles along the north bank of the Wei River, both above and below the capital.

In 212, not satisfied with the palace of his ancestors at Hsien-yang, the First Emperor began the building of a new throne hall within the Shang-lin Park south of the river. Because it was not far from Hsien-yang on the other side, it acquired the popular name of the O-pang or Nearby Palace. The reader is once more referred to Appendix 3 for a consideration of the impossibly large dimensions attributed to this palace (approximately 675 by 112 meters).

Another construction, about which more will be said below, was the First Emperor's tomb. It was planned as early as 246, but is first mentioned as being under construction in 212. The combined labor force used to make the mausoleum and the throne hall is said to have numbered 700,000, a figure that is more than double the 300,000 used by Meng T'ien for his combined military, road, and wall-building activities. Possibly the figure of 700,000 is accurate, but possibly too it was inflated to accord with the special importance attached to these imperial structures.

Conquests and colonizations

The cessation of internal warfare in 221 was followed, after only a brief interruption, by external military and colonial expansion. The movement proceeded both northward and southward, and although dated at 214 in the *Shih-chi*'s sixth chapter, it must have lasted considerably longer than that one year. Meng T'ien's biography says, for example, that "he camped his soldiers along the outer [borders] for more than ten years" – in other words, from almost immediately after 221 until his death in 210, "during which time Meng T'ien awed and terrified the Hsiung-nu."[64] His northern conquests included the Ordos area within the northern loop of the Yellow River, as well as territory farther north in what is now Inner Mongolia and other territory extending northwest as far as modern Lanchou in Kansu.

The southern campaigns, also officially recorded under the year 214 but probably going back as early as 219, resulted in the creation of three and probably four new commanderies covering a good deal of modern Kwangtung and Kwangsi provinces and part of modern Fukien. These conquests were of greater social and economic importance than those in the north because the territories they embraced were fertile and well-watered and

64 The Hsiung-nu were a tribal people of Mongolia and farther north who have sometimes been identified with the Huns. See A. F. P. Hulsewé, *China in Central Asia: The early stage: 125 B.C.–A.D. 23*, with an introduction by M. A. N. Loewe (Leiden, 1979), p. 71 note 4; and Chapter 6 below, pp. 383f.

hence conducive to the spread of the Chinese agrarian way of life. Much of the new land, however, was lost during the troubles at the end of the Ch'in, and had to be regained during the Han.

Connected with the southern campaigns was the third of the great hydraulic works constructed during the reign of the First Emperor. This was the Ling-ch'ü "magic transport" canal. It is never mentioned by name in the *Shih-chi*, but there is a probable reference to it in a passage that mentions the cutting of a canal in 219 for the sending of grain south to support the military campaign.[65] The canal was constructed as a 3-mile link across the mountains that joined the headwaters of a southern tributary of the Yangtze and a northern tributary of the West River. It made possible the uninterrupted transport by water of grain and other supplies from the Yangtze River south through the Tung-t'ing Lake and eventually via the West River all the way to modern Canton. The canal has remained in use, with some post-Han interruptions, until the present day. It constitutes a vital link in a system which, as eventually further developed north of the Yangtze, resulted in an unbroken internal waterway system, unparalleled in any other civilization, extending some 2,000 kilometers or 1,250 miles from north to south (all the way from the 40th to the 22nd degree of latitude).[66]

Large numbers of Chinese were sent to colonize as well as to conquer the new territories. Many, though far from all, were convicts or other disfavored persons. The first instance of colonization dates from 219, when the First Emperor, during an extensive tour of the empire, stayed three months at Lang-yeh, at the beginning of the south side of the Shantung peninsula on the east China coast. No doubt the area at that time was only sparsely populated, because at the conclusion of his stay he ordered 30,000 families to be transported and settled there. They were ordinary civilians, not convicts, and so were rewarded for their move by twelve years of exemption from the usual labor services.[67]

The next major settlements were made in conjunction with the military campaigns of 214, both northward and southward. In the north an unspecified number of "reprobates" (*tse*, another term for convicts, *t'u*) were transported to occupy the newly conquered territories, which were at the same time converted into thirty-four counties. In the same year, in the south, a motley assortment of so-called fugitives (*pu-wang*), bonded servants (*chui-*

65 *SC* 112, p. 2958.

66 The "magic canal" is desctibed in detail in Needham, *Science and civilisation*, Vol. IV, Part 3, pp. 299–306.

67 For the system of labor service and the statutory obligations of service imposed on the population, see Lien-sheng Yang, "Economic aspects of public works in imperial China," in his *Excursions in Sinology* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), pp. 202f.

hsü), and shopkeepers (*ku*) were sent to fight for (and probably settle in) the territory that was being made into the commanderies of Kuei-lin, Hsiang, and Nan-hai. "Fugitives" perhaps means peasants who had gone into hiding to avoid labor or military duties. "Shopkeepers" reflects the prejudice against commerce (see pp. 38 and 59 above). "Bonded servants" were the sons of poor families who, according to post-Ch'in sources, were bonded to work in another family. If after three years the bond was not paid back by their own family, they would become permanent slaves. On occasion, it might happen that they would marry into and thus become sons-in-law of the family which held them.[68] (The position of these and other disadvantaged groups in Ch'in society will be alluded to briefly below.)

In 213 deportees were again sent north to work on the Great Wall and south to southern Yüeh (Kwangtung and just possibly a small bit of northern Vietnam). What makes this entry[69] particularly interesting is that this time the deportees were not convicts or other socially inferior groups, but "functionaries who had not been upright in handling court cases" – in other words, members of the bureaucracy. The Legalists believed in strict punishments, but they were also egalitarians in their readiness to apply the law to all members of the community, regardless of status.

In 212 there was "a renewed sending of 'reprobates' to the frontiers," and in the same year two large movements much nearer the capital took place: Thirty thousand families were sent to Mt. Li, the First Emperor's future mausoleum, and another 50,000 to Yün-yang, summer residence of the Ch'in court and southern terminus of Meng T'ien's Straight Road. These families, like the 30,000 of 219, were not criminals and hence they were rewarded for their move by an exemption of ten years from labor services.

Finally, in 211, thirty thousand families were moved to the Ordos region. In their case the reward consisted of an advance of one degree for each family in the hierarchy of honorary ranks which had been established by Shang Yang. This is the last colonization of which there is a record.

Imperial progresses and inscriptions

The idea of periodic tours of inspection made by the ruler through his realm is well established in the ritual literature of late Chou times. Some of

68 See Niida Noboru, "Kan, Gi, Rikuchō ni okeru saiken no tampo," *Tōyō gakuhō*, 21:1 (1933), 91–103, esp. 97–99; Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 136, 152 note 163; L. S. Perelomov, *Imperiya Tsin – pervoe tsentralizovannoe gosudarstvo v Kitae* (Moscow, 1962), pp. 103–04. 69 *SC* 6, p. 253 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 169).

the early Chou kings, in fact, seem already to have conducted sporadic progresses among the states of their vassals, partly for ceremonial and partly for military reasons. In imperial China, many triumphal progresses were recorded down to fairly recent times; particularly noteworthy for size and lavishness were those of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries made by the emperors of the K'ang-hsi and Ch'ien-lung periods.

Probably no Chinese monarch, however, ever exceeded the First Emperor in the frequency and assiduity with which he traversed his empire. Within a decade he made no less than five tours which brought him to most of the important areas; the last of these continued for some ten months and was still in progress when he died. Aside from the emperor's natural interest and pride in his new possessions, the tours reveal his evident fascination, as a man from the landlocked west, with the seacoast of east China. On all save the first tour he not only visited the coast, but traveled extensively along or near it and stayed at certain coastal spots for considerable periods. A major reason, as will be seen in the next section, was his eager hope of finding the elixir of immortality at or near the sea.

Another conspicuous aspect of all but the first tour was the erection at important places of stone tablets bearing lengthy commemorative inscriptions which uniformly lauded the achievements of the First Emperor in fulsome terms. Six inscriptions were thus erected in the course of five expeditions, all but one of them on mountains. Their literary structure, with some variations, consists of verses of twelve characters each; six such verses constitute a stanza containing seventy-two characters; a single rhyme runs through each stanza.

There is a strong but late tradition that makes Li Ssu (who accompanied the First Emperor on all the tours) both the composer and the calligrapher of the inscriptions. Unfortunately, only one fragment of one inscription survives today, containing eighty-four badly worn characters; other inscriptions that allegedly survive are later creations. However, the texts of all but one of the inscriptions are recorded in the *Shih-chi*. Intellectually, their importance lies in the light they throw on the official thinking and values of their day. (See p. 76 below)

The first imperial progress, in 220, was the only one to go to the western borderlands of the empire. It proceeded west from Hsien-yang some three hundred miles to modern southern Kansu (south of Lanchou), then turned northeast and followed a clockwise circuit that brought it back to the capital.

The second progress of 219 went east to Mt. I (near the southern border of modern Shantung), where the first inscription, whose text is not re-

corded in the *Shih-chi*, was erected.[70] From there the First Emperor went to the famous "sacred" Mt. T'ai (also in Shantung), where he performed the *feng* sacrifice. This ceremony, as elaborated in later times (A.D. 56 onward), was designed to announce to Heaven the glory of the dynasty. In it, Mt. T'ai was conceived as a divine intermediary between man and Heaven. In the time of the First Emperor, however, the ceremony was new and its meaning uncertain. He is said to have performed it in secret, without any record being kept. But it was also on Mt. T'ai that he had the second inscription erected, after which he proceeded to Mt. Chih-fu near the eastern tip of the Shantung peninsula, and then south to the Lang-yeh terrace on the Shantung seacoast. There, not far above the sea, the third inscription was placed, and there too the emperor remained for three months. At the end of that time, as noted earlier, he ordered 30,000 families to be brought in and settled. Then he proceeded southwest into modern Kiangsu and up the Yangtze Valley to central China; then south to a mountain some sixty miles north of Ch'ang-sha (Hunan), whence he returned northwestward to Hsien-yang.

The third progress, made in the following year, 218, took the emperor a second time to the coast, initially to Mt. Chih-fu, where he erected the fourth inscription, and thence to Lang-yeh. The fourth progress, in 215, went a third time to the coast, but this time farther north to Mt. Chieh-shih in Hopei, where the fifth inscription was erected.

In 211, on the day corresponding with the first of November (this is the first time the month and day as well as the year are recorded), the emperor started on his fifth and final tour, this time southeastward, eventually reaching Mt. K'uai-chi in modern Chekiang, not far south of Shao-hsing. On this mountain he sacrificed to the Great Yü (mythological conqueror of the primeval flood and alleged founder of the Hsia dynasty),[71] and here too he erected the sixth inscription. Then he proceeded north, visiting Lang-yeh and Chih-fu for the third time and then turning west for the return to Hsien-yang. He reached a place called Sha-ch'iu (in southern Hopei) where, in a month corresponding to July/August 210, his journey was abruptly cut short by his unexpected death.

70 *SC* 6, pp. 242f. (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, pp. 140f.). For a translation of a text preserved by other means, see Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, pp. 551f.

71 According to Chinese tradition, the Hsia dynasty (trad. 2205–trad. 1766) was founded by Yü the Great and was the first recognized regime to be based on an hereditary system of succession. While the historicity of the dynasty has long been subject to doubt, recent archeological discoveries show clearly the existence of organized communities prior to the Shang period (trad. dates, 1766–1122) and after the Neolithic ages. It remains open to question whether such evidence can be linked with the regime of Hsia, hallowed for so long in the Chinese tradition of the three Golden Ages of the past, under the dispensation of the houses of Hsia, Shang (Yin), and Chou. See Hsia Nai, "San-shih nien lai ti Chung-kuo k'ao-ku-hsüeh," *KK*, 1979.5, 388, and K. C. Chang, *Art, myth and ritual*, p. 20.

Burning of the books and execution of the literati

It is these episodes more than any other that constitute the "excesses" in the title of the present section. In 213, at a banquet in the imperial palace, many academicians ("scholars of wide learning," *po-shih*) came forward to wish the emperor long life. Among them was one who praised him for bringing peace to the world and, more especially, for having converted the former states into commanderies and counties. This induced another scholar, a certain Shun-yü Yüeh from Ch'i (a traditional center of Confucianism), to come forward with a contrary opinion. The reason why the Shang and Chou dynasties had lasted so long, he argued, was that their kings had

given fiefs to their sons, younger brothers and meritorious ministers. . . . At present Your Majesty possesses all within the seas, yet his sons and younger brothers remain common men. . . . Of affairs which, unless modelled on antiquity, can endure for long, I have not heard. . . .

To this criticism, Li Ssu responded vehemently:

The Five Emperors [of legendary antiquity] did not each copy the other. The Three Dynasties [Hsia, Shang, Chou] did not each imitate the other. It was not that in their government they each turned away from the others, but it was because of the changes in the times. . . . This is certainly something the stupid literati do not understand. . . . Now the world has been pacified; laws and ordinances issue from one source alone. . . . However, there are some men of letters who do not model themselves upon the present but study the past in order to criticize the present age. They confuse and excite the ordinary people. . . . If such conditions are not prohibited, the imperial power will decline above and partisanships will form below. It is expedient that these be prohibited.[72]

Li Ssu went on to recommend that all records in the bureau be burned; that all copies of the *Book of songs*, *Book of documents*, and of writings of the various philosophical schools, aside from copies held in the bureau of the academicians, should be brought to the governors of the commanderies for burning; that persons daring to discuss the *Book of songs* or *Book of documents* among themselves should suffer execution with public exposure of the corpse; that "those who use the past to criticize the present" should be put to death together with their relatives; that officials knowing or seeing violators of these regulations but failing to report them should be considered equally guilty; and that persons failing to burn the forbidden texts within thirty days of the issuing of the order should be tattooed and sent to do forced labor. Li Ssu further recommended that writings on medicine,

72 *SC* 6, pp. 254f. (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, pp. 171f.).

divination, agriculture, and forestry should be spared from destruction. Ssu-ma Ch'ien concludes his account with the words: "An imperial decree granted approval."

Li Ssu's recommendation was the logical culmination of Legalist totalitarian thinking. It was by no means the only purposeful destruction of literature in Chinese history, but it was by far the most notorious.[73] Of the works against which it was particularly directed, the collections of early poetry and early historical speeches and writings, known respectively as the *Book of songs* and *Book of documents*, were especially objectionable from a Legalist viewpoint because they were frequently invoked by Confucian and other thinkers who wished to use the past to criticize the present. The histories of states other than Ch'in were, of course, dangerous because they provided possible alternatives to the official Ch'in version of history. And the writings of the philosophical schools obviously often ran counter to Legalist principles.

On the other hand, it is important to note that the destruction was by no means intended to be universal. Besides the categories of literature expressly spared in the final sentence of Li Ssu's recommendation, exemption was made of the Ch'in historical records. This is important because it presumably means that Ssu-ma Ch'ien had better sources at his command for writing his chapter on the state of Ch'in than for treating the other states. Even so, however, he complains in his fifteenth chapter that "only the records of Ch'in remain, but these do not record the days and months and they are brief and incomplete."[74] Perhaps the most important provision was that which permitted copies of the proscribed *Book of songs*, *Book of documents*, and philosophical writings to be kept within the bureau of the academicians; apparently it was only their possession and discussion by scholars at large to which Li Ssu objected.

In short, the actual loss caused by the burning of the books was probably less than traditionally supposed. Although the proscription was not officially revoked until 191 under the Han dynasty, it could hardly have remained effective for more than the five years from its promulgation in 213 to Li Ssu's death in 208, when the Ch'in empire was tottering. It is even conceivable that its harm to literature was less than that inflicted in 206, when the Ch'in palaces at Hsien-yang were burned by rebels (see p. 84). The catalogue of the Han imperial library as it existed around the

73 The Ch'in book burning had possible predecessors and several well-known successors, among which the largest and latest was the literary inquisition of the Ch'ien-lung emperor, pursued from 1772 to 1788 with such effectiveness that out of 2,320 book titles listed for total suppression and 345 others for suppression in part, only 476, or less than 18 percent, survived. See L. C. Goodrich, *The literary inquisition of Ch'ien-lung* (Baltimore, 1935). 74 *SC* 15, p. 686 (Chavannes, *MH*, vol. 3, p. 27).

birth of Christ lists 677 works, of which no less than 524, or about 77 percent, are no longer extant today. This fact suggests that the attrition of literature during the centuries following the Han, especially before printing became current, resulted in an overall loss perhaps even greater than that caused by the Ch'in book burning. Conceivably, therefore, even had the book burning not occurred, the number of surviving Chou texts might not have been a great deal larger than it actually is.

There is no doubt, however, that the book burning had profound psychological effects. It gave later scholars a lasting revulsion against the Ch'in empire, although this fact did not prevent occasional subsequent proscriptions of literature in imperial China. And it induced intensive efforts on the part of Han scholars to recover and reconstitute the lost literature. Thus, if anything, its practical effect was to strengthen the tendency, decried by Li Ssu, of looking backward rather than toward the present.

The second major "excess," that of the "execution of the literati," is recorded under 212, the year following the book burning.[75] Master Lu, a practitioner of magical arts from the east China seacoast, urged the First Emperor to keep himself aloof from other men; in this way, the practitioner claimed, it might be possible to discover the elixir of immortality. The emperor accordingly ordered 270 palaces within a radius of two hundred *li* around Hsien-yang to be furnished with banners, bells, drums, and beautiful women, and to be linked by walled or roofed roads. When he himself visited any of these palaces, anyone revealing his whereabouts would suffer death. Once, looking from a mountain top, the emperor was displeased to notice that the carriages and riders of the chancellor (Li Ssu) were very numerous. Someone told this to the chancellor, who diminished his entourage accordingly. The emperor, realizing that he had an informer, became angry. When nobody would admit guilt, he had all those who had been with him at the time arrested and executed.

From this time onward, no one knew where the emperor went. Master Lu and another of the magicians talked among themselves, accusing the emperor of being "violent, cruel, . . . and greedy for power." After this diatribe, they fled. The emperor, greatly enraged, ordered an inquiry of the scholars with whom the magicians had associated. The scholars blamed one another. The emperor himself then selected 460 men who had violated the prohibitions and had them all put to death. The emperor's eldest son, who criticized him for this act, was sent north to oversee Meng T'ien in the latter's military and building activities. The story has traditionally been made more gruesome by interpreting *k'eng*, the word used to describe the

75 *SC* 6, pp. 257f. (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, pp. 176f.).

deaths of the 460 scholars, as meaning "buried alive." Despite differences of opinion, the word probably really means to put to death rather than to bury (either dead or alive).[76]

The unquestioning acceptance of this story through the ages has contributed not a little to the horror with which the First Emperor has traditionally been regarded. Yet objective examination (see Appendix 2) reveals good grounds for regarding it as more the stuff of fiction (and rather lurid fiction at that) than of history. In short, it seems a reasonable conclusion that the story about the burying alive of the literati did not appear in the original Ch'in record from which Ssu-ma Ch'ien derived his sixth chapter. Either he took it from some other semi-fictional source and combined it, without explanation, with the Ch'in chronicle which was his main source or, more likely, it was added to the *Shih-chi* by an unknown interpolator after Ssu-ma Ch'ien's death for tendentious reasons.[77] In either case, the story has retained its dramatic impact down to the present time. In the early years of the decade 1970–80, its moral has even been turned on its head so as to portray the First Emperor as a "progressive figure."[78]

INTELLECTUAL CURRENTS DURING THE EMPIRE

The Ch'in empire is quite properly regarded as the supreme embodiment of the ideas and techniques known rather loosely as Legalism. It does not follow, however, as is often supposed, that Legalism was the only ideology tolerated by the state. Perhaps this is what a practicing Legalist like Li Ssu would have preferred, and no doubt the burning of the books was a major step in this direction. Nevertheless, this act came late in the dynasty; its scope was less than total; and even had it been total, it could never have succeeded, at least during the lifetime of the First Emperor. This is because

76 Used as a noun, *k'eng* means "pit." This is the basis for the argument that when used verbally, as here, it means "to bury" or even "to bury alive." The same usage also occurs in the episode of the alleged "burying alive" of the 400,000 Chao soldiers who surrendered to Ch'in in 260 (see Appendix 3). However, it has been convincingly demonstrated that in both passages, as well as others, *k'eng* really means only "to destroy" or "put to death." See Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 119 note 3; and Timoteus Pokora, review of Perelomov's *Imperiya Tsin*, in *Archiv Orientální*, 31 (1963), 170–71.

77 Gustav Haloun, professor of Chinese at Cambridge University (1938–51), though he apparently never published anything on the subject, is said by one who knew him well to have doubted the historicity of both the burning of the books and the execution of the literati. See Needham, *Science and civilisation*, Vol. I, p. 101 note d. The present writer believes that Haloun's intuition was correct as to the literati, but that the book burning is too firmly attested by what seem to be official documents (Li Ssu's memorial and the other preceding documents) to be doubted.

78 Hung Shih-ti writes, "In 'burying the Confucian scholars alive,' Ch'in Shih-huang only buried 460 reactionary Confucianists in Hsien-yang who 'used the past to attack the present.' Such a measure of suppression was entirely necessary in order to 'emphasize the present while slighting the past' and to consolidate the unification:" *Ch'in Shih-huang* (Shanghai, 1973), p. 67 (Li Yu-ning, ed. *The politics of historiography: the First Emperor of China* [White Plains, NY, 1975], p. 131).

the emperor himself was interested in, or at any rate gave lip service to, ideas and values that were decidedly non-Legalist.

Li Ssu's very proscription of literature was a reaction to the existence of non-Legalist ideas which he felt to be dangerous to the state. Its immediate cause was Shun-yü Yüeh's proposal to redivide the empire into vassal kingdoms. This was an ideal congenial to Confucian-minded scholars, and Shun-yü Yüeh was a native of the former state of Ch'i, a center of Confucianism. In all probability, he was a Confucian in his thinking.

Shun-yü Yüeh belonged to a state-supported institute of learned academicians (*po-shih*, or more literally, "scholars of wide learning"). Under the Ch'in empire there were seventy of them, possibly because this was the traditional round number of Confucius' disciples. Like so much else, the institution did not originate in Ch'in, for scholars in several states (Ch'i, Lu, Wei), living before the Ch'in conquest, are recorded as holding the title. During the third century it was a common practice among the lords of several major states to maintain considerable entourages of scholars for prestige as well as for practical purposes; Lü Pu-wei, as chancellor of Ch'in, had done likewise. But the most famous of such scholarly groups was that known as Chi-hsia in the capital of Ch'i, where it had been founded during the reign of King Hsüan (319–301) and where it was thereafter maintained by the Ch'i royal house. For many decades it attracted numerous prominent thinkers to that state, and it is a plausible hypothesis that the title of "academician" had its origins within this academy.

This thesis is supported by the fact that it was also in the territory of the former state of Ch'i, in 219, that the First Emperor apparently had his first encounter with academicians. On arriving at Mt. T'ai in Ch'i, he is recorded as summoning seventy "literati (*ju-sheng*) and academicians (*po-shih*) of Ch'i and Lu," the traditional strongholds of Confucianism, to a meeting at the foot of the sacred mountain. His purpose was to formulate the ritual he was to follow when performing the *feng* sacrifice. However, when the scholars had difficulty reaching a consensus (no doubt because, as noted earlier, the *feng* sacrifice was then an innovation), the emperor simply dismissed them and proceeded to perform the ceremony in his own way.

Despite this unpromising beginning, it is probable that the Ch'in academy, whose membership, significantly, was also seventy, came into existence as an aftermath of this meeting. That the prestige of the scholars remained high during the empire is indicated by the exemption of the texts in their possession from the book burning of 213. Although many academicians were quite likely Confucian in outlook, it is evident from several incidents that they were collectively expected to be versed in all major fields of contemporary knowledge. To cite a single example: when, in 210,

the First Emperor dreamed that he had a fight with a sea divinity, he summoned a member of the academy who was "an interpreter of dreams" to explain the dream to him.[79] The Han perpetuated the academy, and these scholars continued to display intellectual diversity. Only with the growing dominance of Confucianism from the time of Wu-ti (141–87 B.C.) onward did they narrow their scope and become specialists in one or another of the Confucian-sponsored classics. Perhaps the most important in a series of steps in this direction was the imperial appointment of "academicians for the five classics" in 136 B.C. (see pp. 74, 754f.).

Legalism itself was far from a monolithic entity under the Ch'in. Its two major branches supposedly went back to Shang Yang (stress on harsh laws, group responsibility, and rewards and punishments), and his contemporary Shen Pu-hai, who died in 337 (stress on the "methods" or "techniques" (*shu*) required for operating an impersonal, bureaucratic administration). It has been argued, but not widely accepted, that the differences between the two branches were so great as to preclude use of the term Legalist as a designation for the Shen Pu-hai branch.[80]

Shang Yang had been chancellor in Ch'in, and Shen Pu-hai had been chancellor in the much smaller neighboring state of Hann. On the face of it, one could expect Shang Yang's influence on later Ch'in government to be dominant. Yet when one examines that government in action, it shows little of the supposed polarity between the two men. Li Ssu, for example, in his famous memorial of 209 on supervising and responsibility, expresses equal praise for Shang Yang's law (*fa*) and Shen Pu-hai's statecraft (*shu*), and finds no contradiction between them.[81] In so doing, he is echoing Han Fei (d. 233), greatest of all the Legalist theoreticians, who said of Shang Yang's law and Shen Pu-hai's statecraft that "both are the instruments of kings and emperors."[82]

More important, the legal texts excavated in 1975 display a more pragmatic, more eclectic, and less one-sided approach to government than might be expected from a reading of the traditional accounts of Shang Yang's policies alone. As noted above, though the laws included in the excavated texts were harsh, they seem hardly more so than was generally the case in their time. Moreover, the laws are by no means merely punitive. In the field of administration, they indicate an interest in quantitative

79 *SC* 6, p. 263 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 190).

80 This is a central contention in H. G. Creel, *Shen Pu-hai: A Chinese political philosopher of the fourth century* B.C. (Chicago and London, 1974). The book is invaluable for rescuing a major political thinker from long oblivion, but there are difficulties in its thesis that Shen, through his now lost writings, played perhaps the major role in the creation of China's bureaucratic government.

81 *SC* 87, p. 2555 (Bodde, *China's first unifier*, p. 39).

82 See *Han-fei-tzu* 17 (43), p. 906 (Liao, *The complete works of Han Fei Tzu*, Vol. II, p. 212).

techniques and a sophistication in political outlook quite remarkable for such an early age. It is the present writer's belief that the ideas and policies of Shang Yang and Shen Pu-hai were less contradictory and more complementary than traditional generalizations have allowed; and that the application of Legalist theory to everyday life under the Ch'in empire was less doctrinaire and more reasonable than would be supposed either from particular recorded episodes (notably the burning of the books and the probably apocryphal execution of the literati) or from the strictures of later Confucian writers.

As to Confucianism, its political ideas (such as a return to the early Chou system of apportioning territories to fiefholders) were of course anathema to the Legalists. Nevertheless, its social and moral values seem to have succeeded remarkably well in coexisting with Legalism during the First Emperor's reign. This fact is demonstrated both by the excavated legal materials and by the grandiloquent statements engraved on the First Emperor's stone inscriptions. An example from the former is the paternalistic letter of exhortation circulated by the governor of Nan commandery among his subordinates in 227. The law it extols is Legalist, but its purpose is the upholding of Confucian-advocated values:[83]

Anciently, the people everywhere had their own local customs. They differed in what they found beneficial and in their likes and dislikes. . . . This is why the sage-kings created laws (*fa*) and regulations (*tu*), with which to straighten and correct the hearts of the people. . . . The purpose of all laws (*fa*), statutes (*lü*) and ordinances (*ling*) is to teach and lead the people, rid them of dissoluteness and depravity, . . . and turn them towards goodness (*shan*). . . .

Another example from the legal texts is the seventeenth of the twenty-five model "patterns" which, though formulated abstractly as guides to legal procedure, were undoubtedly based on actual situations. It is entitled "Denouncing a son":[84]

Report: *A*, who is a rank-and-file member of such-and-such a ward, has made a denunciation which says: "*A*'s own son, *C*, . . . has been unfilial (*pu hsiao*). *A* requests his execution and ventures to make this denunciation (*kao*)."

The report goes on to say that the son was accordingly arrested and interrogated and that he proved to be "truly unfilial." Very unfortunately, it gives no hint as to what kind of behavior merited this designation, nor

83 For transcription of this text, see *Shui-hu-ti Ch'in-mu chu-chien Ch'in-mu chu-chien*, p. 15. The text is untranslated in A. F. P. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, but is discussed with relation to other documents discovered at Shui-hu-ti in A. F. P. Hulsewé, "The Ch'in documents discovered in Hupei in 1975," *TP*, 64:4–5 (1978), 175–217.

84 For a transcription, see *Shui-hu-ti Ch'in-mu chu-chien*, p. 263; translated in Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, E18.

does it indicate the son's ultimate fate. Apparently it was taken for granted that it would in fact be execution. Here there is Legalist harshness, but it is being used to uphold a deep-seated traditional (and by Ch'in imperial times, Confucian) value.

The First Emperor's stone inscriptions are likewise filled with curious mixtures of Legalist and Confucian *dicta*. The Lang-yeh inscription of 214 records the following sentiments within the space of nine lines:[85]

> He has corrected and equalized the laws and regulations.
> (one line omitted)
> He has united fathers and sons.
> His sagely wisdom is humane (*jen*) and righteous (*i*).
> (four lines omitted)
> He has elevated agriculture and proscribed what is secondary.

In the Chih-fu inscription of 218, the First Emperor represents himself as a sage-ruler in the Confucian mold who, like the founders of the Chou dynasty, punishes the powerful and wicked for the sake of the weak:[86]

> The August Emperor (*huang-ti*) pitied the multitude,
> And so he sent forth his avenging hosts.
> (one line omitted)
> He punished with righteousness (*i*), he acted with good faith (*hsin*)
> (two lines omitted)
> The powerful and overbearing he boiled and exterminated;
> The ordinary folk he lifted and saved.

The K'uai-chi inscription of 211 contains a precept which was to become of cardinal importance in neo-Confucian morality some thirteen centuries later:[87]

> A woman who has a child, if she remarries,
> Disobeys the dead and is unchaste.

There is no doubt that Confucian ideals were influential during the Ch'in empire, regardless of how they may have been viewed by such Legalists as Li Ssu, who in 209 urged the Second Emperor to "obliterate the path of 'humanity' (*jen*) and 'righteousness' (*i*), close the mouths of irresponsible speakers, hinder the activities of the 'patriots,' and bottle up 'wisdom' and 'intelligence.' "[88]

85 *SC* 6, p. 245 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 145).
86 *SC* 6, p. 249 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 158).
87 *SC* 6, p. 262 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 188).
88 In his memorial on "supervising and responsibility": *SC* 87, p. 2557 (Bodde, *China's first unifier*, p. 42).

Another intellectual influence, prominently reported in the *Shih-chi*'s sixth chapter, stems from the cosmological school of the Five Elements (*wu hsing;* earth, metal, wood, fire, and water). According to this school, these elements (more properly called agents, *hsing*, or powers, *te*) are constantly succeeding each other according to one or another unvarying sequence. All phenomenal flux, both natural and human, is the result of their eternal permutations. As applied to history, the theory maintained that each dynasty rules under the aegis of the particular element which is dominant at that time.[89] However, when the time comes for the next element to assume dominance, the would-be founder of a new dynasty can, by proper ritual, gain the support for himself of this element and thus assure himself of political success. During the Warring States period, when it was evident that the Chou dynasty (whose protecting element was supposedly fire) would soon be no more, some of the Five Elements cosmologists apparently supported themselves by offering their esoteric skills to rulers who hoped to gain the support of the next element in the series, water.

In 221, immediately following the assumption of the title First August Emperor, the Ch'in ruler is said to have turned his attention to this theory:[90]

The First Emperor advanced the theory of the cyclical revolution of the Five Powers. He maintained that inasmuch as the Chou had held the power of fire, and Ch'in had supplanted Chou, . . . now was the beginning [of the flourishing] of the power of water. . . . He honored black [this being the correlate of water among the colours] as the colour for clothing, pennons and flags. He made 6 [this being the correlate of water among the numbers] be the standard number. Contract tallies and official hats were all of six inches, and the chariots were six feet. Six feet made one double-pace (*pu*), and each equipage consisted of six horses. The [Yellow] River was renamed the Powerful Water (Te-shui), because it was supposed that this marked the beginning of the power of water. With harshness, violence and extreme severity, everything was determined by law (*fa*). For by punishing and oppressing, by having no humanity (*jen*) or kindliness, harmony or righteousness (*i*), there would come an accord with the numerical succession of the Five Powers.

The cosmological justification for the last two sentences is the correlation which the school of Five Elements established between water and winter. Winter, the correlate of water, is the season of darkness and death, and therefore also the season par excellence when legal proceedings, and especially executions, should be carried out. However, the historicity of the entire passage has been challenged on several grounds (see Appendix 2), notably that the two editorial sentences of criticism at the end ("With

89 On this subject see Michael Loewe, "Water, earth and fire – the symbols of the Han dynasty," *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Osasiens/Hamburg*, 125 (1979), 63–68.
90 *SC* 6, p. 237 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, pp. 128f.).

harshness, violence, . . . the Five Powers.") are the real reason for insertion of the passage into the *Shih-chi*. Though this judgment is tempting because of its consistency with the apparent motivation for other probable interpolations, it faces, unlike them, special difficulties which allow it to be regarded only as an attractive possibility rather than a reasonably conclusive hypothesis.

The fourth major intellectual current, again found especially in the thinking of the First Emperor, bears the conveniently loose designation of Taoism. The same Lang-yeh inscription of 219 from which the mixture of Legalist and Confucian sentiment was earlier quoted also contains a line that immediately evokes the mystical approach of early Taoist thought:[91] "He embodies the Way (*Tao*) and practices its power (*te*)." Here appear the two key terms that have provided the title for Lao Tzu's *Classic of the Way and its power* (*Tao-te ching*).

But the Taoism which really attracted the First Emperor was that curious admixture of sorcery, shamanism, physical and mental hygiene, philosophical Taoism, and ideas from the Five Elements cosmologists which centered its efforts on the search for the elixir of immortality. The practitioners of this cult believed that such an elixir could be either found or created, and that its ingestion would ensure the indefinite prolongation of life as an immortal living on certain supernatural island-mountains at sea or on high mountains on land. This belief seems to have been especially prevalent along the northeast seacoast (the former states of Ch'i and Yen), where "there arose innumerable persons who were skilled in extraordinary prodigies, in deceiving flatteries, and who knew how to win people over by evil means."[92]

In 219, when making his first visit to the Shantung coast and there erecting the Lang-yeh inscription, the First Emperor had his initial encounter with the magicians. One of them, Hsü Shih, begged to be allowed to explore the sea in search of three supernatural island-mountains which he said were inhabited by rhe immortals. The emperor, at considerable expense, accordingly senr him, with "several hundreds" of young boys and girls, on a sea expedition from which they never returned. Tradirion has it that they settled in Japan.

In 215, when the emperor made his rhird imperial progress to the coast, this time farther north to Hopei, he again sent a certain Master Lu, followed by three other magicians, on voyages in search of the elixir of immortality. After the emperor had returned to the capital, the same

91 *SC* 6, p. 247 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 151).
92 *SC* 28, p. 1369 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. III, p. 436), with reference to the fourth century B.C. onward.

Master Lu, having himself returned from his fruitless voyage, presented a magical text which contained the words: "That which will destroy Ch'in is Hu."[93] The emperor interpreted this *hu* as one of several designations of the Inner Asian "barbarians," and so straightway sent the general Meng T'ien, with 300,000 soldiers, to attack the Hu along the northern frontier. The real point of the story, however (although the *Shih-chi* does not state it), is that *hu* was also the first syllable in the personal name of the emperor's younger son, Hu-hai. It was this youth, as will be seen, who in fact was to bring the empire to disaster. For reasons explained in Appendix 2, the entire story is another probable interpolation in the *Shih-chi*.

In 212 the same Master Lu is further involved in the probably bogus affair culminating in the burying of the literati (see again Appendix 2). Deletion of this episode means deletion of some of the bitterest criticism of the First Emperor recorded in the *Shih-chi*'s sixth chapter (it occurs in the "secret" conversation between Master Lu and another magician). Lost too is the picturesque anecdote according to which the emperor never went to bed at night before finishing a daily reading quota of one *shih* (nearly 30 kg) of official documents; their weight, of course, resulted from the fact that they were written on strips of bamboo or wood.[94]

In 211 a large meteor is said to have fallen in an area just east of the former Ch'in state. On it an unknown person inscribed the words: "The First August Emperor will die and his land will be divided."[95] The enraged emperor arrested and executed all persons living near the fallen meteor, and the meteor itself he commanded to be destroyed by fire. Saddened by this event, he then ordered academicians to compose poems about the immortals and their realms; these were set to music and sung by musicians. As pointed out in Appendix 2, this unlikely incident is probably yet another interpolation.

Finally, in 210, when the emperor was once again on the Shantung coast at Lang-yeh, the magicians, worried that he would blame them for their previous failures, told him that a huge fish had prevented them from reaching the immortal isles. They proposed that a crossbowman be added to their group so that he could shoot the fish when it appeared. It was soon after this that the emperor had his dream about fighting a sea divinity in human form. The dream was interpreted by one of the academicians as meaning that the emperor, by praying, sacrificing, and concentrating his

93 *SC* 6, p. 252 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 167).

94 *SC* 6, p. 258 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 180). The anecdote is part of the same "secret" discussion, where it is cited not to show the emperor's great devotion to his administrative duties, but his thirst for power. It would be instructive if the excavated legal materials to which reference has so often been made could be weighed to determine approximately how many thousands of Chinese characters can be written on bamboo strips weighing 30 kg.

95 *SC* 6, p. 259 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 182).

attention, would be able to drive away the evil sea spirits and induce the good ones to come. After this he proceeded north along the coast, armed with a crossbow. At Chih-fu, the coastal mountain where in 218 the fourth inscription had been erected, he saw a huge fish, which he shot and killed. It was shortly after this that he himself unexpectedly died.

The First Emperor is the earliest of some half a dozen notable monarchs in Chinese imperial history whose deeds made them seem larger than life to contemporaries and later writers. Thus it was inevitable that colorful or disparaging stories of all kinds should cluster around them. In the case of the First Emperor, these begin with his alleged bastard birth, but thereafter center quite naturally on his final decade as supreme ruler.

There have already been mentioned above his encounter in 215 with Master Lu the magician, who predicted the destruction of the empire; his second encounter with the same figure in 212, leading to the burying alive of the literati; and the fallen meteor of 211 which he ordered to be destroyed by fire because of the inscribed message predicting his own death. Some other episodes recorded in the *Shih-chi*'s sixth chapter seem equally dubious, even though their falsity may be hard to establish. One such episode relates to the second imperial progress of 219, when the emperor, having reached a certain mountain at the southernmost point of his journey (north of modern Ch'ang-sha), there found his advance stopped by a violent windstorm.[96] Attributing the cause to displeasure on the part of the god of the mountain, he became enraged and allegedly ordered three thousand convicts to denude the mountain and paint it red, this being the color of clothing worn by condemned criminals. Here it is not the emperor's belief in the god of the mountain that is in question, but rather his determination and ability to have all its trees cut down and especially to paint it red (see Appendix 2).

Removal of such seemingly fictional elements makes the First Emperor appear considerably less erratic and satanic as a figure of history, but more believable as a human being. There can be little doubt that his encounters with the elixir-seeking magicians have been subjected to embroidery, though just how far this has gone is impossible to determine. Perhaps, however, beneath the embellishments lies a genuine core of fact. The First Emperor was obviously intensely conscious of his extraordinary role as the creator of an unprecedented universal empire, and this consciousness must have made him more than usually aware of the frailties of human life and fearful that his own life might at any moment be interrupted. The result

96 *SC* 6, p. 248 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 154).

could well have been his obsessive interest in the tales of the magicians he first encountered on the seacoast in 219.

In other ways as well it is evident that the emperor was by no means a single-minded Legalist. From men like Li Ssu he no doubt accepted Legalist policy as a political necessity, but to it he added a curious mélange of other ideas, including Confucian notions of a rather elementary sort. The sources also clearly indicate that in his position as supreme ruler he was ready to observe certain religious rites, such as the worship of specified deities or nature spirits – for example, his performance of the *feng* sacrifice at Mt. T'ai. In all likelihood his mind was a microcosm of the ways of thinking that were widely current during the empire. Under the First Emperor, Ch'in was by no means exclusively the stern embodiment of Shang Yang's ideas and institutions it has traditionally been represented as being.

THE COLLAPSE OF CH'IN (210–206 B.C.)

After killing the fish, the First Emperor left the coast to return to the capital. At a place called Sha-ch'iu (near the present P'ing-hsiang in southern Hopei), in a lunar month corresponding to July/August of the year 210, he suddenly fell ill from unstated causes and died. He was in the thirty-seventh year of his reign (the twelfth as emperor), and was only forty-nine years old (he had been born in 259).

The heir to the throne, the emperor's eldest son Fu-su, was staying at the time with general Meng T'ien on the northern frontier, where he had been banished in 212, allegedly for having remonstrated with his father about the execution of the literati. Accompanying the emperor on his journey were not only Li Ssu (by now a man of perhaps seventy), but also one of the emperor's numerous younger sons, Hu-hai, who was the emperor's favorite.[97] Another key person was Chao Kao, a eunuch who had been Hu-hai's tutor on legal matters, and who currently held the strategic function of supervising the dispatching of imperial letters and sealed orders. He was the first in a long line of allegedly notorious eunuchs in Chinese history.[98]

Through combined wiliness and hectoring, Chao Kao persuaded the aging Li Ssu to acquiesce in a plot to place Hu-hai on the throne instead of

97 This is the youth to whom the prophecy alleged to have been made in 215 ("That which will destroy Ch'in is Hu") referred.

98 Considerable care is needed in assessing the merits of the eunuchs in Chinese history because the principal sources were largely compiled by their rivals, whose bias requires correction.

Fu-su. The letter which the dying First Emperor had written to Fu-su, ordering him to go to Hsien-yang to assume the throne, was withheld by the plotters. In its place they issued a false edict conferring the succession on Hu-hai, and a false letter to Fu-su and Meng T'ien accusing them both of disloyalty and ordering them to commit suicide.[99] The letter achieved its purpose. On its arrival Fu-su promptly killed himself, while Meng T'ien, who was more suspicious, was imprisoned with his retainers and before long also committed suicide.

The imperial cortege bearing the body of the First Emperor (whose death, however, was concealed from most of those in the cortege) meanwhile made its way back to the capital. There Hu-hai mounted the throne to become Erh-shih huang-ti, August Emperor of the Second Generation, or more simply, the Second Emperor. He was then aged twenty-one according to Chinese reckoning (an epilogue to the *Shih-chi*'s sixth chapter wrongly says twelve).[100]

Not far away, at Mt. Li (some thirty miles east of Hsien-yang), the First Emperor was interred in the gigantic mausoleum which had been planned since the beginning of his reign and was under construction in 212 and probably earlier. The *Shih-chi*'s description of the tomb corresponds to the grandeur of its occupant. It was filled with valuables of all kinds, surrounded by underground rivers of mercury, and lined with bronze. On the ceiling of the vault were depicted the constellations of heaven and on the floor the extent of the emperor's empire. Crossbows were so arranged that they would automatically discharge their arrows at anyone trying to break in. The emperor was followed in death by large numbers of his concubines. At the same time, many workers who had labored on the tomb were buried with him so that no one would know its secrets. This is virtually the last recorded instance of human sacrifice in China proper (see note 17 above); earlier instances were discussed above.

Beginning in 1974, excavation some distance east of the main vault of the tomb uncovered the first of many thousands of life-size pottery soldiers now known to stand in marching formation in buried passageways leading to the tomb. These figures, world-famous today, probably exceed 7,500 in number. They are realistically colored, facially distinctive, and equipped with armor and weapons. Among them also stand horses and chariots, all sculpted with equal realism. When eventually the tomb itself is actually

99 Though there is no reason to doubt the essential accuracy of the facts here narrated, the actual text of the false letter, as given in the *Shih-chi*'s biography of Li Ssu (*SC* 87, p. 2551), is probably a later composition. See Bodde, *China's first unifier*, pp. 32–33, 93–95.

100 *SC* 6, p. 290 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 241). Traditional Chinese reckoning of age inflates the figures by counting the first year as from the actual date of birth and the second from the New Year's Day of the immediately subsequent calendar year.

excavated, it will be most interesting to see if what it contains will match the description in the *Shih-chi*.[101]

In the spring of 209, the first year of the Second Emperor's reign, the emperor, in imitation of his father, made an imperial progress to the east during which he added supplemental texts to the stone tablet inscription erected by his father. On his return, he renewed construction of the O-pang Palace. Also, at the recommendation of Chao Kao, he allegedly made the laws harsher and executed a number of his siblings. Li Ssu presented to the emperor his famous memorial on "supervising and responsibility."[102]

In the seventh lunar month (August/September of 209), the first rebellion broke out in what had been the state of Ch'u, in modern southern Honan. Ch'en She (also known as Ch'en Sheng), a former hired farm laborer and perhaps for a time an indentured bondsman, had charge of transporting nine hundred convicts to a penitentiary settlement. On one occasion he was prevented by heavy rain from arriving at his destination on time. Knowing that the legal penalty for tardiness was death, he, with an associate, took stock of the situation. Then, according to his biography in the *Shih-chi*, the two men declared:[103] "At present, flight means death and plotting also means death. Evaluating the kinds of death, death for [establishing] a state is preferable!" With these words, they ignited the spark of rebellion which within the next two or three months led to widespread killings of commandery governors and the appearance of several rebel contenders for power. Among the latter, besides Ch'en She himself, were Liu Chi, usually called Liu Pang, the later founder of the Han dynasty, and Hsiang Yü, his initial ally and later rival. (Further reference to the resulting struggle will be given in Chapter 2.)

In the early winter of the Second Emperor's second year (208), Ch'en She's forces invested a city only thirty miles away from the capital. Chang Han, however, who was a capable Ch'in general, compelled them to abandon the siege, using for this purpose a force of convicts who had been pardoned and freed from their apparently still-continuing labors at the First Emperor's sepulcher. Ch'en She was compelled to flee eastward, where, in the twelfth month (January of 208),[104] in modern northwestern Anhwei, he

101 *SC* 6, p. 265 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 193). Among numerous illustrated accounts of these amazing warriors, see, for example, Maxwell K. Hearn, "The terracotta army of the First Emperor of Qin (221–206 B.C.)," in *The Great Bronze Age of China*, ed. Wen Fong (New York, 1980), pp. 334–73. For a description of the tomb that is not as fulsome as that of the *Shih-chi* and may be of earlier origin, see *HS* 51, p. 2328. 102 *SC* 87, pp. 2554f. (Bodde, *China's first unifier*, pp. 38f.).

103 *SC* 48, p. 1950 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. VI, p. 8).

104 *SC* 48, p. 1958 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. VI, p. 22). In the calendar used by Ch'in, the new year started from the first day of the tenth month. The second year of the second Ch'in emperor was thus reckoned from 6 November 209 (Julian); the twelfth month corresponded with 4 January–2 February 208. For the Ch'in calendar, see Bodde, *Festivals*, p. 27.

was assassinated by his own charioteer. By then, however, the rebellion was too widespread to be put down.

Meanwhile, at the court, all power had gravitated into the hands of Chao Kao, who before long induced the puppet Second Emperor to arrest the veteran statesman Li Ssu. In August of 208, almost precisely two years after the death of the First Emperor, Li Ssu underwent a series of mutilating punishments (the five punishments), culminating in cutting in two at the waist in the marketplace of Hsien-yang. His death was accompanied by the execution of all his close kin.

In the winter of the Second Emperor's third year, 207, Chao Kao assumed Li Ssu's former position of chancellor. Meanwhile, the rebellions intensified. The Ch'in general Chang Han, despite his initial successes, surrendered to Hsiang Yü in the seventh month (August/September). Soon afterward, on a date corresponding to 27 September 207, we are told that Chao Kao, to test the extent of his power, presented a deer to the Second Emperor in the court, but called it a horse. Most or all of the courtiers acquiesced in the deception, thus inducing the emperor to believe he was suffering from hallucinations. He went into retirement in an isolated palace, where, sometime during the first half of October, Chao Kao engineered the appearance of a fake armed gang of "bandit rebels." In the ensuing disorder, which involved some fighting, the Second Emperor committed suicide. Chao Kao's next step was to replace the dead emperor with a new ruler. This was Tzu-ying, who was the son of an older brother of the Second Emperor and thus a grandson of the First Emperor. However, because of the disorder in the country, Chao Kao did not invest Tzu-ying with the title of emperor (*huang-ti*), but merely that of king (*wang*). Within a few days Tzu-ying feigned illness, and when Chao Kao came to see him in his apartments, Tzu-ying either stabbed Chao Kao to death himself or had this done by one of his own eunuch attendants.

Forty-six days after Tzu-ying's accession, in a month corresponding to November/December 207, Liu Pang, the future Han ruler, entered the Ch'in heartland through a southern pass and received the submission of Tzu-ying outside Hsien-yang. Liu Pang occupied the capital, but mercifully spared it and Tzu-ying from destruction. However, when Liu Pang's superior, Hsiang Yü, came in turn to Hsien-yang with his forces a couple of months later (January/February 206), he sacked the city, burned the palaces with a resulting loss of literature that was possibly even greater than that caused by the earlier official burning of the books, and executed Tzu-ying. Thus the state and empire of Ch'in came to an end after seven centuries or more of existence.

Four more years of bitter fighting were needed before Hsiang Yü himself

was killed and Liu Pang mounted the throne on 28 February 202 as emperor of a reunited empire. This marks the real beginning of the Han dynasty, though it is conventionally reckoned as having begun its span with the death of Tzu-ying early in 206 and Liu Pang's appointment as king of Han in that year.

REASONS FOR THE COLLAPSE

At least five factors can be advanced to explain the downfall of the Ch'in empire.

Moral factors

Throughout history, the moral factors have been given greatest emphasis by Confucian writers. Chia I (201–169) was perhaps the first to do this in his famous essay, "The faults of Ch'in":[105]

> Ch'in, with its [originally] tiny territory and a force of only one thousand chariots, nevertheless summoned to itself the eight regions of the world and made its peers pay court to it for more than a century. Later, after it had converted everything within the six directions into its home and made the Hsiao and Han passes into its strongholds, a single fellow [Ch'en Shê] created trouble, whereupon its seven ancestral temples straightway toppled, its ruler died at the hands of men, and it became the laughing stock of the world. Why? Because it failed to display humanity (*jen*) and righteousness (*i*) or to realize that there is a difference between the power to attack and the power to consolidate.

There is truth in this argument, but only partial truth. As suggested earlier, the *Shih-chi*'s picture of the Ch'in empire and more especially of the First Emperor is probably made overly somber by the insertion of interpolations. If one disregards these, as well as the emotional denunciations by Han critics like Tung Chung-shu (179?–104?), or if one compares Legalist practice as exemplified in the excavated Ch'in laws with Legalist theory, then a picture emerges which is a good bit more sober than the traditional one.

This is not to say that the Ch'in government did not operate cruelly and exploitatively: the enormous numbers of criminals and unfortunates sent to labor on the Great Wall and elsewhere should never be forgotten. But it is desirable to repeat the suggestion made earlier that what Ch'in did was perhaps not too different from what other states would have done if they had possessed Ch'in's power. Perhaps what some of the Ch'in critics ob-

105 The complete essay, in three parts, is quoted at the end of *Shih-chi* 6 (*SC* 6, pp. 276f. [Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, pp. 219f.]); the passage quoted here is to be found in *SC* 6, p. 282 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 231).

jected to was less the cruelty per se than the greater efficiency with which it was practiced, and the fact that its victims could include the privileged few as well as the unprivileged many.

Intellectual deficiencies

A particular aspect of the moralistic argument maintains that the downfall of Ch'in resulted not solely from moral weaknesses, but that it was compounded by the alleged intellectual deficiencies of the persons primarily concerned. Chia I applies the argument most sweepingly. The First Emperor, he says, was self-satisfied, unwilling to seek advice, and unready to change after committing a fault. The Second Emperor followed the same pattern, while Tzu-ying was feeble and stood alone. "These three rulers were confused and non-understanding to the end of their lives. Was not the loss [of the empire] fitting?"[106]

In A.D. 74 the historian Pan Ku (A.D. 32–92), principal author of the ***Han shu*** (Han history), was officially commissioned to correct what was then evidently felt to be an overly sweeping judgment. His remarks were appended to the *Shih-chi*'s sixth chapter.[107] The First Emperor, he wrote (and he called him "Lü Cheng," thus tacitly accepting the probably unfounded slander that the emperor was the bastard son of Lü Pu-wei), was cruel and oppressive. Nevertheless he unified the world, enjoyed unbroken military success for thirty-seven years, and created governmental institutions which came down to later rulers. "He would then seem to have acquired a majesty such as that of the sages." His successor, Hu-hai, on the other hand, displayed extreme stupidity (*yü*, a word which means both intellectual obtuseness and moral blindness). He executed Li Ssu (by implication a competent statesman) and relied on Chao Kao. "His head was that of a man, but his voice that of a beast." As for Tzu-ying, despite inevitable weakness and lack of training, he at least had the courage to kill Chao Kao: "In life and death alike, he fulfilled the demands of right conduct (*i*)."

In recent times, scholars have formulated further variations on this theme. According to Kuo Mo-jo (writing in 1945), if Lü Pu-wei's policies had been followed, Ch'in would not soon have collapsed. Later, Kuo's opinion changed sharply. But according to Lo Ssu-ting (writing in 1974), the blame for the collapse rested on the eunuch Chao Kao who, he asserts quite unconvincingly, was a "thoroughgoing Confucian."[108]

106 *SC* 6, p. 278 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 222).
107 *SC* 6, p. 290 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, pp. 241–46).
108 Kuo Mo-jo, *Shih p'i-p'an shu* (Chungking, 1945), p. 300; Lo Ssu-ting, "Lun Ch'in Han chih chi ti chieh-chi tou-cheng," *Hung-ch'i*, 1974.8, 18f.; both are cited in Li Yu-ning, ed., *The First Emperor*, pp. xxvii, lxii.

Repudiation of tradition

The criticism that Ch'in's policy was too much at variance with the institutions of the ancient sage-kings was first uttered by the academician Shun-yü Yüeh, whose speech to the First Emperor directly provoked Li Ssu's proposal to burn the books. It has remained a stock Confucian criticism ever since. Chia I expresses it once more when he says: "If only the Ch'in ruler [the First Emperor] had planned his affairs according to earlier generations, and had administered his government on the model of the Yin [Shang] and Chou dynasties," or "if only the Second Emperor . . . had divided the land and its people so as to provide fiefs to the descendants of meritorious ministers, and had established principalities and their lords so as to bring decorum to the world" – if only these and similar things had been done, then, despite the deficiencies of these two rulers, the empire would still not have been lost. "He who does not forget the past is master of the future. This is why the man of superior attainments (*chün-tzu*), when he handles the state, observes it in the light of antiquity."[109]

Many Western historians would probably respond sympathetically to Chia I's version of Santayana's famous dictum.[110] Very few, however, would agree that administrative ability lies in dividing the country into dependencies rather than keeping it under central rule. A more likely criticism from a Western point of view would be that the First Emperor, by restricting mercantile growth in accordance with Legalist doctrine, set a pattern of bureaucratic domination which prevented China from ever experiencing an economic and social development such as in the West led to the Renaissance and all that followed. Such a criticism, which is of course oversimplified here, was naturally never thought of in traditional China.[111]

Social factors

The suggested explanations have all so far been those stressed by Chinese traditional historiography. At the other end of the spectrum is the Marxist view, which sees history in terms of social institutions and class struggle.

109 *SC* 6, pp. 283–84 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, pp. 233–34); *SC* 6, p. 278 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 224).

110 "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." See George Santayana, *The life of reason* (New York, 1905), Vol. I, Chapter 12, p. 284. The subtle difference of emphasis between the two statements is worth noting. Chia I's dictum (which he cites as "a popular saying") implies that one should imitate what is good of the past; Santayana's dictum implies that one should avoid what is bad.

111 Yang K'uan, *Ch'in Shih-huang*, p. 119, cites the First Emperor's deportation of merchants in 214 as harmful to economic development, but he does not draw from it the portentous consequences suggested here.

Ch'en Shê, it will be remembered, had been a hired farm laborer, perhaps even an indentured bondsman, before he, with members of his convict gang, started his revolt against the Ch'in. Curiously similar is the story of Liu Pang, the Han founder. Of agrarian background, he too, shortly before 209, had been in charge of convicts. On one occasion, while he was bringing them to work on the First Emperor's tomb at Mt. Li, several had escaped en route. Liu Pang released the others and with a group of twelve began his climb to power by becoming a "bandit." It is not surprising, then, that these uprisings should be hailed by Chinese Marxist historians as the first peasant rebellions in Chinese history and hence as evidences of class conflict. Hung Shih-ti writes in his *Ch'in Shih-huang*:[112]

> In . . . 209 B.C. . . . a large-scale peasant uprising – the first of its kind in Chinese history – broke out . . . under the leadership of two poor tenant peasants . . . [Ch'en She and his associate Wu Kuang]. . . . This uprising ignited the prairie fire of a nationwide peasant revolt. . . . The great peasant revolt . . . set a brilliant example for the antifeudal struggle of the peasants of our nation. It . . . eloquently testified to a great truth: "The people and the people alone are the motive force in world history" (Mao Tse-tung, "On coalition government").

The large mass of convicts used for military and labor purposes, and for the colonization of new territories, apparently consisted of a mixed assortment of unfortunates. Among them were common criminals, persons forced by economic circumstances to become fugitives, and persons belonging to disfavored groups; also some merchants and, on one occasion, even "functionaries who had not been upright in handling court cases." These and others must have formed a large reservoir of resentful and desperate people ready to participate in rebellion when the central government fell into rapid decay following the death of the First Emperor.

Does this fact, however, mean that the outbreaks were the culmination, or even the beginning, of class struggle in the Marxist sense? The answer would seem to be "no" if such struggle is thought of as involving any clear-cut consciousness among its participants of "class solidarity" within each class and of "class contradictions" between classes. It is quite unlikely that such consciousness existed among the dispossessed and alienated persons who provided the human materials for the rebellions. The Ch'in general Chang Han, for example, successfully used freed convicts to beat back the attacks of Ch'en Shê's peasant-convict forces, and when, not long afterward, Ch'en met his end, death came from his own charioteer, not from the enemy. Little evidence of "class solidarity," and considerable evidence of opportunism and

112 The passage appears on pp. 72–73 of the original edition of 1972, but not in the later edition; translated in Li Yu-ning, ed. *The First Emperor*, p. 161.

selfish interest, can be found in the struggles which the several rebel leaders conducted not only against Ch'in, but among themselves.

It is impossible to discuss here the vexing question of the structure of Ch'in society, and especially that of whether the number and economic productivity of its "slaves" were sufficiently high to warrant calling Ch'in a society dominated by slave relations. *Nu*, the recognized term for a person who becomes a slave for life or for one who is born into slavery, occurs only very rarely in the Ch'in sources. Other terms denoting various kinds of disfavored or serflike persons occur more often, especially in the excavated legal texts. Yet these terms are used so casually and unclearly that they provide only a meager basis for determining the status, number, economic importance, and relationship to full slaves (*nu*) of the persons they designate.[113] In the opinion of this writer, attempts to establish neat definitions of Ch'in society in terms of social and economic relations are still premature.

One thing, however, can be said: regardless of how the rebellions at the end of the Ch'in be interpreted, they failed to bring any really lasting improvement in the status of the dispossessed as against the privileged. Probably little significant change took place in this respect under the Han, broadly speaking, and this was long to remain the situation in China. Whatever changes did come came only very slowly.

Overextension of resources

Regardless of whatever weight is attached to any of the above or other explanations, perhaps there is at least one on which some measure of agreement can be found. This is that when the Ch'in, after centuries of bloody warfare, suddenly expanded from a state to an empire, the tasks it took upon itself were simply too much to accomplish within too short a time. Hence its failure was inevitable.

Tensions before the First Emperor's death are only barely hinted at in the sources but were surely there. In 218, when he was travelling to the east, "bandits" caused an alarm (actually there was an attempt to assassinate him), but they escaped and could not be found, despite a ten days' "great search" ordered throughout the empire. Again in 216, when the emperor moved incognito at night in Hsien-yang accompanied only by four soldiers, he encountered robbers who sorely threatened him until they were killed by

113 This judgment is maintained here despite the solid and, in large part, carefully reasoned study by Kao Heng ("Ch'in lü chung 'li ch'en ch'ieh' wen-t'i ti t'an-t'ao," *WW*, 1977.7, 43–50) on the status and functions of the *li ch'en ch'ieh* (bondsmen and bondswomen), as deducible from the Ch'in legal materials, where they are often mentioned. The evidence seems weak for Kao's deduction (pp. 43–44) that the *li ch'en ch'ieh* were slaves of the government during their entire lifetime.

his escort; on this occasion a "great search" was made for twenty days around the capital. What is probably more important is that in the same year a *shih* (nearly 20 liters) of grain is said to have cost 1,600 cash coins; undoubtedly this was a huge sum of money (otherwise the entry would not have been made), even though its value in other commodities is unknown. Perhaps it is not too surprising that the empire failed to last long beyond the reign of its First Emperor.

Ethical considerations apart, it was probably fortunate that the Ch'in lasted as short a time as it did. What is extraordinary is that despite its brevity, it succeeded in transmitting to its political successor a system of state bureaucracy which, after elaboration and consolidation by the Han, continued to flourish for another seventeen hundred years with only gradual modifications. Had the system been allowed to crystallize in its pristine Legalist form, with tight centralized control over every segment of the structure, it is unlikely that it could have lasted so long. It is the Legalist/Confucian symbiosis evolved during the Han, with administrative controls at the top merging into self-administered behavioral standards below, that gave to the Chinese state the necessary combination of firmness and flexibility that enabled it to survive. Whether one admires the Ch'in achievement or not, it must be recognized for what it was: a transformation of the face of China so great both quantitatively and qualitatively that it deserves the name "revolution" even though it was imposed from the top, not forced from below. This, rather than the transfer of political power brought about by the anti-Ch'in peasant rebellions, was the true revolution of ancient China. Indeed, it was China's only real revolution until the present century.

APPENDIX I: SOURCES AND MODERN STUDIES[114]

On Ch'in history, the most important sources are the relevant chapters in China's first universal history, the *Shih-chi* or *Historical records*. This great work, which covers all of Chinese history from the legendary beginnings to around 100 B.C., is the combined creation of Ssu-ma T'an (d. 110 B.C.) and especially of his son, Ssu-ma Ch'ien (ca. 145–ca. 86). Its most important chapters as far as Ch'in is concerned are the fifth (a year-by-year chronicle of events in the Ch'in state down to 246) and the sixth (the same for the state and empire, 246–206). In what is presented in these pages, the basic sources for narrated events, unless otherwise specified, have normally been these two chapters. Much briefer and less important, but occasionally useful for confirming or adding to chapters 5 and 6, is chapter 15 (a table of events in Ch'in and its major contemporary principalities, 476–

114 For a general consideration of sources, see the Preface and Introduction.

206). Other relevant materials occur in the *Shih-chi*'s monographic chapters, especially those on the state religion (chapter 28), waterways (chapter 29), and economic development (chapter 30). All of these are included in the fine French translation of the *Shih-chi* by Édouard Chavannes, *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien* (1895–1905). The second half of the *Shih-chi* consists of biographies of prominent individuals, including several of paramount importance for Ch'in history. The most significant of these has been translated and discussed in Derk Bodde, *China's first unifier: A study of the Ch'in dynasty as seen in the life of Li Ssu* (280?–208 B.C.) (1938); three others appear in Derk Bodde, *Statesman, patriot, and general in ancient China: Three* Shih-chi *biographies of the Ch'in dynasty* (255–206 B.C.) (1940). A bibliography of translations of parts of the *Shih-chi*, compiled by Timoteus Pokora, has been included in Vol. VI, of *Les Mémoires historiques* (Vol. VI published 1969; pp. 113–46).

The sequel to the *Shih-chi* is the *Han shu* (*Han history*), compiled by Pan Ku (A.D. 32–92) and other members of the Pan family. A few of its chapters overlap accounts in the *Shih-chi* of events linking the fall of Ch'in with the rise of Han. Moreover, some of its monographic chapters or "treatises" contain brief but significant materials on Ch'in; especially important in this respect are chapter 23 on law, translated in A. F. P. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han law*, Vol. I (1955); and chapter 24 on state economics, translated by Nancy Lee Swann, *Food and money in ancient China* (1950).

Among the sources used by Ssu-ma Ch'ien for covering the Warring States period (403–221), one that is still extant is the *Chan-kuo ts'e* (Stratagems of the warring states); English translation by James Crump, *Chan-kuo ts'e* (1970). Although one portion of this text deals with episodes in Ch'in history, its value as compared with the *Shih-chi* is slight, both because of its episodic nature and the fact that so much of it is anecdotal and literary rather than historical. A partial version of the *Chan-kuo ts'e*, recovered in 1973 from the Han tomb number 3 at Ma-wang-tui, Ch'ang-sha, contains material not found in the traditional version. However, the new material seems to throw little light on Ch'in history. A transcription of the text into modern Chinese is contained in *WW*, 1975.4., 14–26, and in *Chan-kuo ts'ung-heng chia shu*, ed. *Ma-wang-tui Han mu po-shu cheng-li hsiao tsu* (Peking, 1976).

On the intellectual side, the rise of the Ch'in empire is particularly connected with the school of political theorists known as the Legalists. Translations and studies of major Legalist writers and statesmen include W. K. Liao, *The complete works of Han Fei Tzu* (1939, 1959), a somewhat mediocre translation of the most notable Legalist theoretician (d. 233); Herrlee G. Creel, *Shen Pu-hai: A Chinese political philosopher of the fourth century B.C.* (1974), a challenging and controversial attempt to reconstruct the ideas of a statesman-thinker whose writings have long been lost; and

above all, Jan Julius Lodewijk Duyvendak, *The Book of Lord Shang: A classic of the Chinese school of law* (1928). This is a study of the statesman Shang Yang (d. 338), who was primarily responsible for the rise of Ch'in; it also translates the important Legalist text traditionally but erroneously ascribed to Shang Yang. For a later Russian study which in some respects goes beyond Duyvendak, see L. S. Perelomov, *Kniga pravitelya oblasti Shan (Shan tsyun shu)* (1968), and the review by Timoteus Pokora in *TP*, 55 (1969), 322–24. These two books should be compared with the earlier study by Yang K'uan, *Shang Yang pien-fa* (1955), available in English translation with lengthy introduction, in Li Yu-ning, ed., *Shang Yang's reforms and state control in China* (1977).

Generally speaking, the critical standards of Ssu-ma Ch'ien were remarkably high. Moreover, his chapters on Ch'in are more detailed and probably more reliable than those on the other contemporary principalities. This is because the Ch'in historical records (now lost), on which the chapters were largely based, were expressly exempted from the destruction of literature ordered by the Ch'in government in 213. These chapters, nevertheless, especially the crucial chapter 6 on the empire, contain certain tendentious or improbable episodes which quite likely were added anonymously to the *Shih-chi* after Ssu-ma Ch'ien's time for ideological reasons. Several of these appear in the main text above and are analyzed at greater length in Appendix 2 below.

Aside from possible interpolations, a major problem for modern historians is the narrow focus of the *Shih-chi* and other Ch'in sources. There is heavy emphasis on political and military history, but often only passing reference to institutional, sociological, and economic developments. This situation has sometimes induced historians to formulate sweeping generalizations on the basis of scattered references that may be perilously brief, casual, and ambiguous.

Fortunately, archeology is now increasingly helping the historian. With respect to Ch'in, important research includes the excavations (begun in 1974 by the People's Republic of China) of a major palace at the Ch'in capital of Hsien-yang (still only in a preliminary stage as of 1978) and of numerous life-size pottery figures at a site 1.5 kilometers distant from the mausoleum of the First Emperor. An account of the excavation and reconstruction of the palace by T'ao Fu may be found in *WW* 1976.11, 31–41. For a good illustrated account of the pottery figures, see Maxwell K. Hearn, "The terracotta army of the First Emperor of Qin (221–206 B.C.)," in *The Great Bronze Age of China*, ed. Wen Fong (1980).

Most important of all is the 1975 discovery, in the grave of a man who died in 217 and who was a Ch'in local official, of legal and administrative

texts written on over a thousand strips of bamboo, which, with wood, was the traditional Chinese writing material before the invention of paper. These texts, which include laws almost surely derived from the Ch'in code, predate by some nine centuries the hitherto earliest surviving Chinese code, that of T'ang of A.D. 653. Transcriptions and translations of the texts into modern Chinese are published in *Shui-hu-ti Ch'in-mu chu-chien*. Two books have been published under this name, one in 1977 and one in 1978. All notes in this chapter refer to the latter, which is much the better edition.[115] The statutes and other legal writings which are cited above have been taken from the above-mentioned book of transcriptions. To these transcriptions, however, should now be added the splendid English translation of all the texts by A. F. P. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law* (1985). The same author's earlier valuable articles on the subject include "The Ch'in documents discovered in Hupei in 1975," *TP*, 64:4–5 (1978), 175–217; "Weights and measures in Ch'in law," in *State and law in East Asia*, ed. Dieter Eikemeier and Herbert Franke (1981); and "The Legalists and the laws of Ch'in," in *Leyden studies in Sinology*, ed. W. L. Idema (1981). Further studies and translations thus far include, in English, Derk Bodde, "Forensic medicine in pre-imperial China," *JAOS*, 102:1 (1982), 1–15; and Katrina C. D. McLeod and Robin D. S. Yates, "Forms of Ch'in law: an annotated translation of the *Feng-chen shih*," *HJAS*, 41:1 (1981), 111–63.

Chinese historians of the past, with very few exceptions, uniformly condemned the Ch'in as uncultured or even "barbarian," as well as ruthless in its use of Legalist techniques to achieve its political aims. Thus a fairly recent survey of the attitudes of traditional and modern Chinese historians toward Ch'in cites only two premodern scholars as strongly favorable. They are Liu Tsung-yüan (773–819) and Wang Fu-chih (1619–92). See Li Yuning, ed., *The politics of historiography: The First Emperor of China* (1975), pp. xvi-xvii.

Among modern Chinese historians, however, beginning in the second decade of the twentieth century, opinion has been much more mixed, with a growing tendency to find positive features. This tendency assumed flood proportions in 1972 with the rise in the People's Republic of China of the movement to praise Legalism and denigrate Confucianism. Of the many writings illustrative of the changing orientation, by far the most scholarly is a relatively early work (1956), Yang K'uan's *Ch'in Shih-huang*, whose viewpoint, despite its effort to interpret the rise of Ch'in in Marxist terms, remains partly traditional. Instructive as a contrast is Hung Shih-ti's popularization of Yang K'uan's book, first published in 1972 under the same

115 See Derk Bodde, "Forensic medicine in pre-imperial China," *JAOS*, 102 (1982), 1–2.

title in an initial printing of 1.3 million copies (as compared with Yang K'uan's 25,000).

Hung's work is shorter, eliminates documentation, and treats its subject in much more simplistic terms. An English translation of Hung's book, prepared by Drs. K. C. Ma and Chang Pao-min, is contained in Li Yu-ning, *The First Emperor of China*; for a comparison of the books by Yang and Hung, see pp. xxxviiiff. See also the excellent earlier survey by A. F. P. Hulsewé, "Chinese Communist treatment of the origins and foundations of the Chinese empire," *The China Quarterly*, July-September 1965, 78–105. It should be added that following the death of Mao Tse-tung in 1976, the pro-Legalist and anti-Confucian campaign has quite ceased.

Modern Japanese scholars have contributed some very important monographic studies and articles on particular aspects of Ch'in history. Several are cited in the present chapter.

Among Western specialized works, the earliest (1909) is Albert Tschepe, *Histoire du royaume de Ts'in (777–207 av. J.C.)*. This is a detailed translation or paraphrase, mostly based on the *Shih-chi*, which presents Ch'in history reign by reign and year by year, factually and without evaluation. Serious scholars would do better to read Chavannes's earlier-cited translation, *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien*. On the political, cultural, and intellectual aspects of the Ch'in empire and the decades immediately preceding, there are the two books by Bodde mentioned earlier: *China's first unifier* and *Statesman, patriot, and general in ancient China*, especially the former. Much more sociologically oriented is the small but stimulating work by the Soviet scholar L. P. Perelomov, *Imperiya Tsin–pervoe tsentralizovannoe gosudarstvo v Kitae* (1962). Although its views on topics like slavery in ancient China are by no means identical with those of Chinese Marxists, it shares with them the tendency to reach broad conclusions on the basis of what are necessarily often uncertain data. (See the detailed review by Timoteus Pokora in *Archiv Orientální* 31 [1963], 165–71.) A compromise between the political and sociological approaches is the popular but scholarly little book by Dr. Pokora himself in Czech, *Čchin Š'chuang-ti* (1967).

APPENDIX 2: INTERPOLATIONS IN THE *SHIH-CHI*

The *Shih-chi* contains accounts of some half dozen incidents in which the First Emperor is portrayed in a strongly unfavorable light, particularly in chapter 6. It has been suggested above, without detailed arguments, that these are probably or at least conceivably interpolations. The incidents, and the dubious circumstances involving each one, are as follows:

Bastardy of the First Emperor

The reasons for doubting the account of the First Emperor's peculiar birth (see pp. 42–43) have been detailed elsewhere (Bodde, *Statesman*, pp. 15–18) and hence need only be summarized here. The first is that the passage in question is only one of several curious passages in Lü Pu-wei's biography (*SC* 85), strongly suggesting that extensive portions of this chapter may have suffered from tampering. Second, the parallel section on Lü Pu-wei in the *Chan-kuo ts'e* (17 [Ch'in 5], pp. 275f.; tr. Crump, *Chan-kuo ts'e*, no. 109, pp. 137–39) differs from the *Shih-chi* in many respects and omits the story of the bastard birth entirely. Third, the *Shih-chi*'s story of bastardy rests on a single sentence whose peculiar and ambiguous wording readily suggests that an interpolator has been at work. Finally and most significantly, the story is closely paralleled by that of another royal bastardy recorded both in the *Chan-kuo ts'e* (17 [Ch'u 4], p. 575; tr. Crump, *Chan-kuo ts'e*, no. 227, pp. 274–77); and in *Shih-chi* 78, pp. 2396f. According to these texts, King K'ao-lieh of Ch'u (262–238), being childless, was presented with the already pregnant concubine of a prominent Ch'u statesman whose position in Ch'u was very comparable to that of Lü Pu-wei in Ch'in. The son subsequently born to the former concubine was then recognized by the Ch'u king as his legitimate heir and eventually succeeded him on the throne, though of course he was in actual fact the son of the statesman. It seems quite plausible that whoever devised the story about the First Emperor's birth was inspired to do so by the tale of his Ch'u contemporary.

Execution of the scholars in 212

A sober examination of the connecting links in this episode (see pp. 71–72) should be enough to indicate its almost certainly fictional character: the stocking of the "270 palaces" with beautiful women, and so forth; the concealed connecting roads and the emperor's own secrecy; his spying on the movements of the chancellor from the mountain top; the word-for-word recording of the "secret" conversation between the two magicians, with its stinging indictment of the emperor (the inclusion of which in the Ch'in historical records would have been most unlikely); and finally the emperor's self-selection of over 460 men and his ruthless execution of them.

To these somewhat intangible considerations can be added a concrete point of decisive importance, the fact that when the two magicians have their talk about the emperor, one of them refers to him as Shih-huang, the

First Emperor. This violates a cardinal semantic principle of the *Shih-chi*'s sixth chapter (and other chapters dealing with the Ch'in empire), as pointed out by Kurihara, *Shin Kan shi no kenkyū*, pp. 14–24. Kurihara demonstrates that although the First Emperor adopted the title of Shih-huang-ti, The First August Emperor, in 221, this title throughout the rest of his life was reserved for his personal use only. In statements and documents composed by other persons during his remaining reign, he is referred to only as Huang-ti, the (present) emperor, never as Shih-huang-ti or Shih-huang (the First Emperor). The same principle applies to his successor, Erh-shih huang-ti (August Emperor of the Second Generation). Only three passages in the *Shih-chi* violate this principle. The first is the one under discussion; the second involves the fall of the meteor in 211 (the next-to-last item below); the third (involving the Second Emperor) is less consequential and so is left undiscussed. In all three passages, dubious circumstances other than this cardinal principle support the conclusion that they are not historical.

Not too long before this chapter went to press, support for the hypothesis enunciated here came from an article by Ulrich Neininger, "Burying the scholars alive: On the origin of a Confucian martyrs' legend," in Wolfram Eberhard, Krzysztof Gawlikowski, and Carl-Albrecht Seyschab, eds., *East Asian civilizations: New attempts at understanding traditions*, no. 2: Nation and mythology (Munich: Simon & Magiera, 1983), pp. 121–36.

Adoption of the element water in 221

The historicity of this episode (see pp. 77–78), based on the cosmological speculations of the Five Elements school, has been challenged by Kurihara, *Shin Kan shi no kenkyū*, pp. 45–91, and Kamada, *Shin Kan seiji seido no kenkyū*, pp. 42–93. Among their many arguments are the *Shih-chi*'s complete failure after 221 to refer again to Ch'in's association with water until 166, when the question of the elements and dynastic succession once more became a live issue at the Han court; the fact that from 221 until the end of Ch'in, the Yellow River is invariably referred to in the texts simply as the river (*ho*), never as the Powerful Water (*te-shui*); and the fact that the use of the number 6 (the numerical correlate of water) and its multiples during the Ch'in (the division of the empire into thirty-six commanderies in 221, the resettlement of 120,000 prominent families in the environs of Hsien-yang in the same year, the prosody of the First Emperor's rhyming stone inscriptions in verses of 12 characters, etc.) can be paralleled by numerous similar uses of 6 and its multiples in texts both before and after the Ch'in empire. Hence it has no particular association with the element water. (For example, the

double pace, *pu*, had already had a length of 6 Chinese feet before the First Emperor allegedly decreed this length for it in 221.) Finally, the most telling argument, as pointed out on pp. 77–78 above, is that the two editorial sentences of criticism at the end of the quotation are the real *raison d'être* for inserting the whole passage into the *Shih-chi*, and that criticisms of such a sort would never have been permitted in the Ch'in annals which were Ssu-ma Ch'ien's major source for his account.

These arguments are tempting, but against them must be posed a major difficulty: the fact that the emperor's adoption of water as the dynasty's element in 221 is recounted not only in *SC* 6, p. 237, but also, with variations, in three other chapters as well (*SC* 15, p. 757; *SC* 26, p. 1259 [Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. III, p. 328]; *SC* 28, p. 1366 [Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. III, p. 430]). It would require an interpolator of exceptional astuteness and acquaintance with the entire work to insert all these parallel passages and do it so skillfully as to leave no telltale breaks between them and the surrounding texts. Thus the thesis that this was done cannot be convincingly substantiated and remains only an attractive possibility.[116]

Presentation of the prophetic text in 215

The historicity of this episode (see pp. 78–79), in which a magical text was presented to the First Emperor bearing the words "That which will destroy Ch'in is Hu," is made doubtful by several considerations: the self-fulfilling nature of the prophecy, the improbability that such a dire prediction would ever be actually submitted to a strong-willed autocrat like the First Emperor, and the awkward manner in which Master Lu's presentation of the document, apparently made on the eastern seacoast, is fitted into the surrounding *Shih-chi* text only at a point after the emperor has made his own way back from the coast to the capital, rather than, as would seem more natural, while he himself still remained by the sea.

Fall of the meteor in 211

Aside from the inherent improbability of this episode (see p. 79), its lack of historiciry is evidenced by the wording of the text allegedly inscribed on the meteor: "The First August Emperor will die and his land will be divided." This is the second *Shih-chi* passage violating the principle that during the lifetime of the First Emperor his title of First August Emperor

116 For the political and dynastic significance attached to the choice of one of the Five Elements, see Loewe, "Water, earth and fire."

was used only by himself, never in the statements or writings of others. The other major violation, that involving the execution of the literati, occurs in the second item discussed above.

Punishment of a mountain god in 219

Although concrete proof that this incident is fictional is hard to establish, its central episode (see p. 80), the First Emperor's order to three thousand convicts to denude the mountain of all trees and paint it red, seems not only historically unlikely, but also an act that would have been exceedingly difficult to carry out physically.

APPENDIX 3: STATISTICS IN THE *SHIH-CHI* AND ELSEWHERE

The question of the reliability of recorded statistics is a frequent one in all Chinese historical writings, and certainly not least in the *Shih-chi* and other sources used for the present chapter. In the foregoing pages the question of statistical reliability arises some seven times, but could be alluded to only briefly, prior to a more detailed discussion in this appendix. Besides the seven cases that follow, there is a further instance of a dubious statistic. No account of it is included here because no more can be added to the suggestion already made in note 32, that a textual error is very possibly responsible.

Late Chou population figures

Figures for specific cities or areas (see p. 24) are virtually nonexistent with the exception of a reference in a speech allegedly made in 323 B.C. and recorded in the *Chan-kuo ts'e* (8 [Ch'i 7], p. 337; tr. Crump, *Chan-kuo ts'e*, no. 126, p. 157). The speech refers to Lin-tzu, capital of the state of Ch'i in east China, as having a population of 70,000 households, which, according to usual methods of calculation, would mean well over 350,000 individuals. This high figure is quite unlikely when compared with the population of some half a million believed by modern scholars[117] to have lived in the first century A.D. in the Later Han capital of Lo-yang, then the capital of an entire empire, not merely of a single principality. How dubious the *Chan-kuo ts'e* statement is for purposes of historical research is indicated by the metaphor with which the speaker goes on to describe the crowding in

117 See Hans Bielenstein, "Lo-yang in Later Han times," *BMFEA*, 48 (1976), 19–21.

the Lin-tzu streets. So numerous are the pedestrians, he remarks, that "when they shake the sweat from themselves, a rain falls."[118]

Sizes of armies in the third century

The huge sizes of armies (see p. 25), as reported in the *Shih-chi*, raise serious problems of credibility. A force of 600,000, for example, is stated to have been used by Ch'in in its campaign of 224–223 which led to the destruction and annexation of the state of Ch'u; see *SC* 73, pp. 2339–40 (biography of Wang Chien, the Ch'in general who led the campaign). This figure, which refers to the army before Ch'in became an empire, seems incredibly high when compared with the figures, ranging from 130,000 to 300,000, recorded for troops and cavalry representing the entire Han empire during the campaigns of 133–90 B.C., which took place under Wu-ti against the Hsiung-nu in Inner Asia. Even these Han figures, in fact, are very possibly inflated. See Loewe, "The campaigns of Han Wu-ti," pp. 92 and 95–96.

Casualties inflicted by Ch'in armies

For the 130-year period of 364–234, the *Shih-chi* records fifteen major battles or campaigns in which Ch'in was involved and for which there are listed the casualty figures allegedly inflicted by Ch'in on its opponents (see p. 40). In all but one instance, the casualties amount to 20,000 or more, and in four they reach the staggering levels of 100,000 or more. Most extraordinary is the Ch'ang-p'ing campaign against Chao in 260 in which, during five or six months of preliminary fighting, the Chao side is said to have lost 50,000 men; then, when its remaining 400,000 soldiers surrendered at Ch'ang-p'ing itself to the Ch'in general Po Ch'i, the latter "by force and treachery massacred them all," except for 240 of the youngest whom he allowed to return to Chao.[119] The combined casualties thus allegedly inflicted by Ch'in on all its rivals during the entire 130-year period amount to 1,489,000.

These statistics require comment. First of all, it should be noted that they represent only the losses inflicted by Ch'in on other states; Ch'in's own losses are never recorded, though they too must have been considerable.

118 Sekino, *Chūgoku kōkogaku kenkyū* pp. 246 and 280, after quoting the *Chan-kuo ts'e* statement, remarks that it is exaggerated. With seeming inconsistency, however, he later expresses the opinion that the population of Lin-tzu during late Warring States times may have amounted to several myriads of households.

119 This affair is described in detail in the *SC*'s biography of Po Ch'i (*SC* 73, p. 2335), where a final gruesome touch is given by the word *k'eng*, here rendered as "massacred," but often incorrectly interpreted as meaning "buried" or "buried alive." See note 76 above.

Second, the figures are incomplete because only twice do they include the wounded or captured. In all other instances (except for the "massacring" of 260), the standard term used is *chan*, "to decapitate," which is the technical term (going back to Shang Yang's time) for killing in battle. In the third place, besides the fifteen battles or campaigns for which the *Shih-chi* specifies casualties, there are many others for which it gives no figures at all. All these considerations mean that the total casualties suffered by Ch'in and its opponents alike, including wounded and captured as well as killed, must have been proportionately a great deal higher than the recorded figures.

Finally, the figures appear incredible when compared with those for modern battles and campaigns of world importance whose casualties are known with reasonable accuracy. Take, for example, Napoleon's Russian campaign of 1812, in which a force of some 453,000 invaded Russia in June, and fewer than 10,000 returned to France in November. This at first sight compares rather neatly with the five- or six-month Ch'ang-p'ing campaign, with its allegedly almost total loss of 450,000 Chao soldiers. Yet the similarity is more apparent than real, for of these 450,000, only 50,000 were lost during the preliminary campaign of several months (a reasonable figure), whereas at Ch'ang-p'ing itself the number suddenly destroyed was 400,000 (an unreasonable figure).

In short, the figures for Ch'in-inflicted casualties are as difficult to accept literally as are the sizes of armies questioned in the preceding item. It would not seem physically possible, for example, with the technical means at hand, to have massacred virtually completely an army of 400,000, even granted the known fact that this army had been weakened by siege and hunger before surrendering to perhaps an army of greater size. Nor does it seem possible that Ch'in's opponents, or Ch'in itself for that matter, could have continued to raise huge armies time after time in the face of such crushing losses, without suffering economic or probably political collapse.[120] One partial answer to the problem possibly lies in the word *wan* (myriad), a round number constantly appearing in military accounts (and in nonmilitary contexts too; see the last two items below), where perhaps it is only symbolic and is to be understood as signifying no more than "large unit."[121]

120 Hsu, *Ancient China in transition*, footnote on p. 68, takes a contrary view, but his arguments are unconvincing, at least to this writer. For example, he believes that Wei had a population of around five million and therefore could "fairly easily" have raised an army of three to five hundred thousand. Even if this were possible to do once – which is far from certain – could conscriptions of such size have been made repeatedly?

121 This suggestion has been made by Loewe, "The campaigns of Han Wu-ti," p. 96, in connection with Han army figures. The difficulty of dealing with Chinese numbers and statistics is discussed well by Yang Lien-sheng, "Numbers and units in Chinese economic history," in his *Studies in Chinese institutional history* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), pp. 75–84. Probably *wan* (myriad), should be coupled with *ch'ien* (thousand), whose indefiniteness as a round number is discussed by Yang on p. 77.

The 120,000 families shifted to Hsien-yang in 221

This figure, multiplied by five (the usually accepted basis for converting family statistics into individual statistics in China), results in a total of 600,000 (see p. 55 above). Even this huge figure, however, probably falls well short of the implied actual total, inasmuch as the aristocratic families which were shifted would have included large entourages of servants, concubines, slaves, etc., and hence would have been considerably larger than the average peasant family of five which the premodern Chinese had in mind when they used this method of calculation. The figure of 120,000 thus seems highly arbitrary. Possibly it was selected as a multiple of 6, the numeral which the Ch'in government allegedly decided to emphasize in 221 as part of its cult of the element water and its correlates (see pp. 77–78). As against this interpretation, however, the historicity of the *Shih-chi* passages describing this cult has been challenged (see Appendix 2). Yet, as shown there, the case against the authenticity of the passages in question is far from conclusive, so the interpretation of 120,000 as a multiple of 6 remains possible.

Width of the Ch'in imperial highways

According to a statement in *HS* 51, p. 2328, the "speedways" built by Ch'in in the years following 220 had a width of 50 double paces (*pu*), which is equivalent to approximately 70 meters and is therefore far too wide (see p. 61). Possibly "fifty double paces (*pu*)" is a textual error for "fifty feet (*ch'ih*)," which would then mean a width of approximately 11.5 meters. Even this is wider than most Roman roads, whose width was rarely greater than 8.5 meters. Conceivably, the width as given in the *Han shu* referred to the Ch'in roads as they existed near the capital, where one or more central lanes were apparently reserved for the equipages of the emperor and authorized members of the ruling house, whereas messengers, officials, and other travelers were permitted to use only the outer lanes. However, this distinction between imperial and nonimperial lanes probably petered out some distance from the capital. See Needham, *Science and civilisation in China*, Vol. IV, Part 3, p. 7.

Length of the Ch'in Great Wall

When this subject was discussed earlier (pp. 62f.), the plausible though admittedly not absolute conclusion reached was that in all probability the Great Wall built for Ch'in by the general Meng T'ien was somewhat

shorter than might at first be imagined upon reading, in the *Shih-chi*, that the wall extended "more than ten thousand *li*." It is unnecessary to repeat here the arguments made to support this conclusion, other than to say that they center on the word *wan*, normally signifying "myriad," but interpreted as probably having a figurative rather than literal meaning in this particular passage. Such use of *wan* figuratively is by no means unique. Several instances have already been cited in this Appendix, and yet another will be cited below.[122]

Dimensions of the Ch'in O-pang Palace

Allegedly, the great throne room known as the O-pang Palace (see p. 64), construction of which began in 212, measured 500 Ch'in double paces (*pu*) from east to west and 500 Ch'in feet from north to south, or approximately 675 by 112 meters.[123] These figures are incredibly large and made doubly suspect by the text's further statement that the hall could accommodate the conveniently round number of 10,000 persons (once more the symbolic number *wan*, "myriad"). It is instructive to compare such figures with the realistic dimensions (approximately 86 by 16 meters) available for the throne room built in A.D. 60–65 for the Later Han dynasty in Lo-yang (which, however, is likewise said to have been able to accommodate 10,000, a "myriad"[124] persons!), or those of the great throne room still standing in the Forbidden City in Peking, which measures somewhat over 60 by 30 meters.

122 For a consideration of major aspects of the Great Wall throughout dynastic history, see Arthur Waldron, "The problem of the great wall of China," *HJAS* 43.2 (1983), 643–63.

123 *SC* 6, p. 256 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, pp. 174–75).

124 For the dimensions of the throne room in the Later Han palace, see Bielenstein, "Lo-yang in Later Han times," p. 35.

CHAPTER 2

THE FORMER HAN DYNASTY

THE PATTERN OF POLITICAL HISTORY

The Han dynasty bequeathed to China an ideal and a concept of empire that survived basically intact for two thousand years. Before Han, imperial government had been experimental and it had become discredited; after Han, it was accepted as the orthodox norm for organizing mankind. Up to 210 B.C., if we may believe our sources, Ch'in imperial officials had enforced their will with some measure of harshness, severity, and oppression; by the first and second centuries A.D. emperors could command the loyal service of officials whose authority was subject to generally recognized standards of behavior. A centralized government, vested in a single emperor and his officials, had become respectable; and despite its weaknesses and failures, or the defeat of a Chinese empire by a foreigner, this form of polity was to remain unquestioned until almost the end of the nineteenth century.

This achievement – the acceptance of the imperial ideal – was accomplished partly by dynastic success and partly by deliberately fostering new political concepts. At first sight it is somewhat surprising that those concepts earned credence, in view of the difference between the practical expedients of administration and the ethical claims put forward on behalf of the imperial dispensation. As in Ch'in, so in Han effective government depended in the last resort on compulsion; but whereas the emperors of Ch'in and the first statesmen of Han had been content to justify their exercise of power in material terms such as the possession of territory and the success of arms, the emperors of Han were shortly to seek a moral and intellectual justification which would legitimize their rule in superhuman terms. The search for such a justification was no easy or short process, and its stages may be traced in the political history of two centuries. By the time of Wang Mang's reign (A.D. 9–23) and the Later Han dynasty (A.D. 25–220), that search had been successfully accomplished; the necessary premises had been established; philosophical theory had been firmly linked with the practice of imperial government; and emperors of China were ever

afterward able to maintain that their authority derived from higher, unseen powers.

These results were achieved in the course of two centuries' dispute over religious, intellectual, political, and economic issues. Two principal attitudes emerged and gave rise to consistent policies that concerned these closely interrelated problems. At the same time, differences of attitude and policy were interwoven with a further main cause of dispute among the leading men and women of the day. This lay in the problem of the imperial succession, and the implications of favoritism, power, and privilege for an imperial consort or her relatives. For very often the chief functionaries of government were the grandfathers, fathers, or brothers of an imperial consort; their political fortunes and the fate of their policies were at times closely related to the degree of favor enjoyed by their near kin in the palace.

The two attitudes are denoted here as modernist and reformist, respectively. They cannot be wholly identified with the schools of thought that are sometimes described as "Legalist" and "Confucian," if only because those schools had hardly emerged as discrete, defined unities during the first two centuries B.C. Moreover, the issues on which Han statesmen differed were by no means identical with those which subsequently became criteria for distinguishing Legalist and Confucian thought.

Modernist policies derived from the unification of China by Ch'in and the operation of imperial government under the principles of Shang Yang, Shen Pu-hai, and Han Fei.[1] They were directed to the effective use of the resources of the state to enrich and strengthen China; their aims were conceived in materialist terms, with a view to the present or the future rather than the past. Under the guidance of modernist statesmen, the Han emperors continued to worship the same powers, or *ti*, as had been the object of reverence in Ch'in; they were content to govern from a capital city chosen for its strategic advantages rather than its ideological links; and the two instruments of government, rewards and punishments, were used to encourage service to the state and to deter crime or dissidence. The same statesmen sought to control and coordinate the Han economy by means such as the regulation of the coinage, the supervision of the salt and iron industries as monopolies of state, and the export of China's surplus produce in exchange for imports. They were anxious to extend the influence of Han administration into ever-wider territories, for in this way they hoped to increase the revenue and strength of the government, to drive potential enemies away from China, and to preclude the danger of invasion or raids. Modernist foreign policy was thus positive and expansionist; it depended on

1 For these thinkers, see Chapter 1 above, pp. 72f.

a readiness to launch offensive expeditions deep into Central Asia or the southwest.

The first century of the Han empire witnessed the implementation, modification, or extension of these policies in a number of ways. By about 100 B.C. modernist statesmen had achieved their highest point of success; internal morale and discipline had perhaps reached the highest level that it would attain during the dynasty; new types of officials served to tighten the central government's hold over the provinces; and on the periphery the farms and towns lay reasonably free from the threat of violence. The non-Chinese states of Central Asia had come to respect both Chinese civilization and the force of Chinese arms, and they were willing to tolerate, if not always to welcome, the large caravans which set out annually from Ch'ang-an. Experts who were well versed in trade and understood the problems of collecting and distributing supplies presided over the Han treasury. Above all, the dynasty could boast some measure of permanence; it had been established for just over a century, and both religious and symbolic acts of state proclaimed its faith in its own authority. By such means the government sought to command the loyalty of men of intellect, the cooperation of landowners, and the obedient service of the peasantry.

The climax of modernist policies is seen in the success of foreign and military ventures by 108 B.C. and the symbolic changes of protocol and procedure of 104 B.C. But shortly afterward it became evident that the Han imperial government had overtaxed its strength and that the material resources of the empire could no longer support colonial expansion. As the tide turned against the ideas of modernist statesmen, opponents began to voice their opinions. A major debate between the two groups took place in 81 B.C., and in the succeeding decades reformist policies gained increasing acceptance.

Reformists sought to purge China of its ills by reverting to what they saw to be traditional values. Like their opponents, they too took the view that China could best be governed under a single imperial system. But the ideal regime wherein they sought inspiration was that ascribed to the kings of Chou[2] rather than that of the First Emperor of Ch'in; they wished to reform current abuses by harking back to those earlier ideals. Reformists saw imperial government as an instrument for improving the standard of life of the population and also for extending to them the benefits and values of a superior culture. They recognized *t'ien*, or Heaven, the prime object of

2 The kings of Chou (traditionally 1122–256 B.C.) claimed that they had received the right to rule from Heaven. Believing that they alone were entitled to be honored as king (*wang*), they sought to exercise a moral leadership over all known parts of civilized China. From about the eighth century, their actual authoriry had declined markedly.

worship by the kings of Chou, as supreme arbiter of the universe, and they took the ethical precepts of Confucius and his followers as their ideal. Their preference lay with Lo-yang rather than Ch'ang-an as the site of imperial government: For Lo-yang was linked with the kings of Chou and their cultural past, while Ch'ang-an's claim as a capital city rested on those same material advantages that had led the Ch'in emperors to Hsien-yang. Under the guidance of reformist statesmen, Han emperors distributed material bounties to demonstrate their generosity; they did not exploit a system of state rewards to lure men to serve the empire.

While modernist statesmen wished to control the mines, reformists preferred to leave these open for private exploitation, and they were willing to interfere with individual freedom or initiative only to discourage oppression of the poorer members of the community. Reformists also sought to limit expenditure of resources that was designed solely to increase the area of imperial territories or to glorify the Han regime. They therefore advised retrenchment rather than an expansion of relations with the outside world; they questioned the value of importing goods which they regarded as exotic and of little practical benefit to the Chinese people; and they were ready to accommodate to foreign leaders rather than insist on a display of Chinese superiority.

For all these differences, both attitudes derived from the principle that the known world of China should be governed as a single unit and not as a multiplicity of states, and the conduct of Han government was frequently marked by compromise. Officials could rely finally on the administrative methods of Shang Yang or Li Ssu, but such methods would again prove to be intolerable without the clemency that is traced to the humanitarian ideals of Confucius, Mencius, or Mo-ti.[3] The ideal of a perfectly ordered hierarchical society which is described as Confucian could not withstand the grim realities of crime, dissidence, or invasion without some effective measures of legalist controls. But a conspicuous change of balance is discernible in the Former Han period, after the high successes of modernist statesmen. The change is seen in the proliferation of acts of amnesty and grants of bounty from 77 B.C. onward; in the honorable treatment accorded to a leader of the Hsiung-nu in 51 B.C.; in the withdrawal of Chinese administration from Hainan in 46 B.C.; in the attempt to abolish the state monopolies in 44 B.C.; in the adoption of new state cults in 31 B.C. The change of attitude came to fruition in the ideology espoused by Wang Mang and practiced during the Later Han, whose capital city was firmly established not at Ch'ang-an, but at Lo-yang.

The imperial institutions and intellectual framework of the Han empire

3 For the place of these thinkers in the development of Chinese thought, see Fung Yu-lan, *A history of Chinese philosophy*, trans. Derk Bodde (London and Princeton, 1952), Vol. I; and Wing-tsit Chan, *A source book in Chinese philosophy* (Princeton and London, 1963), Chapters 3, 9, 12.

were evolved and modified as a result of controversy, violence, or rebellion. The founders of the dynasty had contended with rivals who saw China's future as a hegemony of states rather than as a single imperial unity; this issue was settled in the wars fought between Liu Pang and Hsiang Yü from 209 to 202 B.C. Once their initial work was completed, the founders faced the problem of organizing an empire. Either they could delegate large areas to their supporters, with some measure of independence, or they could bring all territories, offices, and authority under the direct and effective control of the central government. After a period of some seven years of disarray, it became possible to choose the latter course; but it was not until the revolts of 154 and 122 B.C. had been crushed that the process of eliminating potential sources of independence had been largely completed.

Other changes took even longer to bring to fruition. The idea that temporal authority derived from Heaven, ancient as it was, had hardly been invoked during the turbulent centuries that had preceded the unification. It was voiced again, in support of imperial government, in the decades before 100 B.C., but it was only toward the end of Former Han that it received official recognition. Similarly, the theory that a regime grew to prosperity in accordance with the Five Phases (*wu-hsing*) of creation, decay, and rebirth had been formulated at least as early as the third century B.C., but it was only toward the end of Former Han that it was put forward in what was to be its orthodox form, on an official basis.

From around 135 B.C. a new basis had been laid down for training officials, whose intellectual background and outlook was to be nurtured on the Confucian canon of scriptures.[4] The controversies which raged regarding the choice of such texts, their relevance to matters of state, and their correct interpretation came to the fore in a meeting of scholars convened in 51 B.C.; the changes from existing practice which were then adopted were in turn followed by more intensive changes some fifty years later.

Changes of attitude or policy were at times associated with the fate of imperial consorts or the fortunes of their families, as may be seen in a number of significant incidents. To promote the interests of her own kin, the empress Lü (r. 188–180 B.C.) ignored a promise made between her late husband (Kao-ti, r. 206–195 B.C.) and his supporters that only blood relations of his own house should rule. Later, the family of Wu-ti's (r. 141–87 B.C.) empress Wei was actively associated with the expansionist policies of modernists, and was in time succeeded by statesmen of the Huo family, who were also related to the emperor through marriage. But the prominence of these families and their domination of political decisions was checked by the open clash with their rivals of another family in 91 B.C.;

4 For the Confucian canon, see pp. 154 and Chapter 14 below, pp. 754f.

the fall of the Huo family in 66 B.C. marked the success of reformist statesmen in advocating their own policies, to the discomfiture of their opponents. Toward the end of Former Han, the court was rent by the rivalries of different families of consorts which could not but affect the course of Wang Mang's career (r. A.D. 9–23 as emperor of the Hsin dynasty) and the adoption of his reformist policies.

A few individual statesmen, generals, or imperial favorites deserve to be singled out for mention in view of their major significance in Han history. Their names are chosen because their influence long survived their own lives and affected later dynasties; or because their names are frequently cited by Chinese historians of later ages as classic cases of behavior, be it virtuous or evil.

Hsiao Ho (d. 193 B.C.), the earliest chancellor (*ch'eng-hsiang*) of the dynasty, is usually credited with much of the work of its foundation, and Ch'en P'ing (d. 178 B.C.) and Chou P'o (chancellor, 178–177 B.C.) are held up as statesmen who were able to restore the imperial family of Liu after the empress Lü's unlawful domination of the throne. Chia I (201–169 B.C.), who is often classified as Confucian, may be regarded nevertheless as a staunch defender of the imperial system, whose views were to become accepted by the modernist statesmen of the next generation. He is usually cited as a classic example of a wise official who was not appreciated in his own time and died disappointed and without trial in high office. Ching-ti (r. 157–141 B.C.) was served by the practical-minded Ch'ao Ts'o who, like Chia I,[5] put forward positive suggestions on how to consolidate the powers of the central government and to strengthen the empire against foreign threats; as a result of personal jealousy and intrigue, he died at the hands of the executioner (154 B.C.). Chou A-fu (chancellor, 150–147 B.C.) is remembered as a loyal servant of state who died a victim of his imperial master's whim.

During Wu-ti's reign (141–87 B.C.), Chang Ch'ien[6] (fl. ca. 125 B.C.) explored routes leading out of China to the northwest and southwest, pioneering the way for forward expansion and colonization. Of the most famous generals who led imperial armies against the Hsiung-nu or others, some ended their campaigns with victory, some in ignominy. They included the emperor's own relatives by marriage, such as Wei Ch'ing (d. 104 B.C.) and Huo Ch'ü-ping (d. 116 B.C.),[7] who were the brother and

5 For Chia I and Ch'ao Ts'o, see pp. 144f. below.

6 See pp. 164f. below, and Chapter 6 of this volume, pp. 407f. For further details, see A. F. P. Hulsewé, *China in Central Asia: The early stage 125 B.C.–A.D. 23*, with an introduction by M. A. N. Loewe (Leiden, 1979), pp. 40f., 207f.

7 See Michael Loewe, *Crisis and conflict in Han China* (London, 1974), pp. 51f.; and Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 74 note 35.

nephew, respectively, of the empress Wei; and Li Kuang-li, a brother of the imperial consort Li, who surrendered to the Hsiung-nu in 90 B.C.[8] Other officers who led armies and are worthy of mention included Li Kuang, who committed suicide in 129 B.C. rather than face the punishment of failure; Chao P'o-nu, who was captured by the enemy in 103 B.C.; and Li Ling, whose surrender to the Hsiung-nu in 99 B.C. followed the brilliant feat of penetrating deep into Central Asia against great odds.[9]

Kung-sun Hung[10] is remembered in the annals of Chinese history as the classic case of a man who rose from the humblest circumstances of a keeper of pigs to the office of chancellor, highest in the land, which he held from 124 to 118 B.C. His contemporary Tung Chung-shu (ca. 179–104 B.C.) never attained high office, but he affected Chinese political thought more significantly than most of those who served in eminent public positions.[11] It was his philosophy which linked the exercise of imperial rule with the structure of the universe and which was destined to become the intellectual mainstay of China's imperial system. Meanwhile the active affairs of government lay within the grasp of modernist statesmen such as Huo Kuang (d. 68 B.C.) and Sang Hung-yang (executed 80 B.C.). Huo Kuang was related to Wu-ti's empress Wei; Sang Hung-yang had arisen from mercantile origins in Lo-yang, and was the leading genius behind the efforts to systematize and regularize China's economy.[12]

In the northwest, Cheng Chi[13] was the first of ten officers appointed to be protector-general (*tu-hu*), in the hope of coordinating Chinese relations with the states that lay athwart the Silk Roads; he held the post from 59 to 49 B.C. Reformist statesmen who came to the fore in the reigns of Hsüan-ti, Yüan-ti, and Ch'eng-ti (altogether, 74–7 B.C.) and made deliberate departures from the policies of Wu-ti's modernist advisers included Wei Hsiang (chancellor 67–58 B.C.), Hsiao Wang-chih (imperial counsellor, *Yü-shüh ta-fu,* 59–56 B.C.), Kung Yü (imperial counsellor 44 B.C.), and K'uang Heng (chancellor 36–30 B.C.).[14] They were the contemporaries of Liu Hsiang (79–8 B.C.),[15] a member of the imperial family whose

8 See p. 168 below; and Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 228f.

9 For Li Kuang, see p. 164 below; and Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 213, note 792, and 86f. For Li Ling, see p. 169 below; and Michael Loewe, "The Campaigns of Han Wu-ti," in *Chinese ways in warfare*, ed. Frank A. Kierman, Jr., and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), pp. 119f.

10 Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 20, 199, 207.

11 See pp. 171f. below, and Chapters 12, 13 and 14 of this volume.

12 See pp. 160f. below; and Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 66f., 72, and 115f.

13 See Chapter 6 below; and Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 47f., 63f.

14 See Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 131f., 147f., 158f., 179f., and 233.

15 See Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 240f.; and Michael Loewe, *Chinese ideas of life and death: Faith, myth and reason in the Han period (202 B.C.–A.D. 220)* (London, 1982), p. 211.

powerful intellect lent weighty support to the reformist cause. Reformist statesmen who took a leading part in politics toward the end of the Former Han included K'ung Kuang (chancellor 7–5 B.C.), a descendant of Confucius; Shih Tan (marshal of state, *ta-ssu-ma,* 8 B.C.), known for his proposal to control the extent of landholdings; and Ho Wu (imperial counsellor 8 B.C.). They were opposed briefly and ineffectively by Chu Po (chancellor 5 B.C.), a man of military daring rather than statesmanlike finesse, and Tung Hsien, Ai-ti's minion, who committed suicide in 1 B.C.[16] Wang Mang was the fifth member of his family to hold the title of marshal of state (8–7 B.C.); just as the earlier reformists had enjoyed the intellectual support of Liu Hsiang, so could Wang Mang call on the help of his son Liu Hsin (d. A.D. 23).[17]

THE FOUNDING OF THE DYNASTY (210–195 B.C.)

Civil war and the victory of Liu Pang

The unification of China had been completed in 221 B.C., following the cumulative achievements of over a century. Although the idea of a united empire may not necessarily have been new, its practice formed a new departure, and its efficacy had yet to be demonstrated. The imperial succession had recently been manipulated; there were signs that the maintenance of law and order could not always be assumed; and the institutions of government had not been tried sufficiently long to prove themselves effective. The process of unification had seen the defeat of several well-established kingdoms, each with its own history and traditions. Some of these, such as Ch'i or Ch'u, had existed as viable regional states, and it may be surmised that, despite the unification, loyalties to ancient houses and a nostalgia for regional independence may well have survived among the remnants of the old royal families, their officials and their retainers, and presumably among many of their subjects.

It is not possible to determine how far popular opinion responded in those years to the call of leaders or men of ambition; how eagerly it awaited a chance to throw off the yoke of tyranny; or how anxious it was to see a restoration of the old, pre-imperial order. Our sources reveal little of the reactions of the thinking men of the day, and the leaders whose names are recorded may be divided into two types. Some of them came from humble origins, often as peasants at the head of locally raised troops. They appear

16 See Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 252f., 267f., 274f.
17 See Loewe, *Ideas of life and death*, p. 211.

in the first instance as disaffected conscripts, called up to serve the Ch'in empire. Roused to the point of desperation by their sufferings, they were prepared to stake all on chance rather than to face the exactions of Ch'in law; they came from families which had hitherto made no mark in Chinese history. The other type of leader comprised those men who had enjoyed prominent positions as members of the old royal families or as senior military officers in their employ. They had been accustomed to exercising authority and inspiring soldiers to fight bravely in battle; they were better equipped than the leaders of the local bands to plan a coordinated campaign of warfare; and they were not unused to encountering treachery among their confederates.

The organization of the Ch'in empire into administrative units termed commanderies (*chün*) which were controlled from the center in preference to fiefs which were entrusted to the emperor's kinsmen, may have been a source of weakness in the crisis of 210 B.C. Certainly the rejection of fiefs had prevented the rise of strong independent regional adversaries who could challenge the authority of the center; but it left the provinces without any effective authority. The commanderies and counties were not sufficiently well linked to ensure the effective mobilization or deployment of forces, or to enforce authority as directed from the center. When violence broke out simultaneously in several regions, local governors or magistrates, and even the central government itself, could easily be endangered. On several occasions a local uprising which started with the murder of a provincial official proved difficult to contain. The imperial regime had forfeited such advantages as might lie in a system of fiefs without acquiring the strength of a fully organized central system.

Four stages may be discerned in the confused fighting of these years (210–202 B.C.). First, there were peasant uprisings, which were followed by the establishment of independent kingdoms. From these there developed Hsiang Yü's attempt to build a confederacy of nearly twenty states; finally came the contest for mastery between Hsiang Yü and Liu Pang, at the end of which the latter succeeded in founding the Han dynasty.

From the seventh month of 209 B.C., a series of independent and uncoordinated uprisings broke out against the authority of the Ch'in government, in which the rebel leaders achieved some limited successes. Before long a number of kingdoms had been established – Ch'i and Yen in the east; Hann,[18] Wei, and Chao in the north, and Ch'u in the south. They claimed to be the rightful successors of those kingdoms which had suc-

18 Hann lay to the east of Ch'in. The name of this state is written with a different character from that of Han, the dynasty that succeeded Ch'in; in order to avoid confusion, the name of the pre-imperial state is rendered here as Hann in place of the correct Han; see entries in the Glossary-Index.

cumbed to Ch'in's aggressive unification; of these kingdoms it was Ch'u, in the lower Yangtse River area, which took the lead against Ch'in. Two significant turning points may be observed in the fighting and political maneuvers, whose course will be described in greater detail below.

During the fighting of 207 B.C., Hsiang Yü established his reputation as a successful tactician who was capable of defeating the armies of Ch'in in the field and forcing Ch'in's leading generals to surrender.[19] As a result, Hsiang Yü was able to seek and assume the role of leader in coordinating subsequent attacks on Ch'in. Secondly, the execution of Li Ssu in the seventh month of 208 B.C. may be taken as marking the end of Ch'in's might; for it was Li Ssu who had been largely responsible for building the empire of Ch'in on sound principles. His execution was due to the antagonism of rivals who placed personal ambition before the interests of the state and whose ruthlessness matched theit jealousies.[20]

In the final stages of the civil wats, Hsiang Yü possibly commanded better troops than Liu Pang; but the latter enjoyed strategic advantages which proved to be superiot, such as the possession of a well-established base in Kuan-chung, in the northwest,[21] and the united support of the northern part of China. The course of the wars illustrates the importance of the Huai River valley, whose rich ctops filled the famous Ao granary at Hsing-yang; this in itself constituted an important military objective. Farther north, Chü-lu was a city of equally great value whose capture seriously weakened the defenses of Ch'in. The entry of Liu Pang, and later Hsiang Yü, into Kuan-chung heralded the start of the final stages of the civil war.

Ch'en She and Wu Kuang are named as the two men who were the fitst to challenge the authority of the Ch'in empire. In the seventh month of 209 B.C.,[22] they were leading a party of nine hundred conscripts whose arrival for duty had been delayed owing to heavy rains. Whatever the cause for such dereliction might have been, the punishment was death, and the two men decided that, in a bid to evade such a fate, they would stage an open rebellion. Their example was soon followed by others, whose first moves were to put to death some of the Ch'in officials in isolated country districts. Of all these leaders, it was Ch'en She who gave signs of the

19 *Shih-chi* 6, p. 273 (Édouard Chavannes, *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-Ma Ts'ien* [Paris, 1895–1905; rpt. Paris, 1969], Vol. II, p. 211); *Han shu* 1A, p. 20 (Homer H. Dubs, *The history of the Former Han dynasty* [Baltimore, 1938–55], Vol. I, p. 54).

20 *SC* 6, p. 292 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 210); *SC* 87, p. 2562; Derk Bodde, *China's first unifier: A study of the Ch'in dynasty as seen in the life of Li Ssu* (280?–208 B.C.) (Leiden, 1938; rpt. Hong Kong, 1967), p. 52.

21 For the advantages of Kuan-chung, or "area within the passes," see Chapter 1, p. 46.

22 *SC* 7, p. 297 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 250); *SC* 48, p. 1950; *HS* 1A, p. 9 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 37).

greatest ambition. He went so far as to assume the grandiloquent reign title of Great Ch'u (Chang Ch'u).[23]

However, Ch'en She's authority could not stand the stern test of battle. Together with Wu Kuang, he was defeated by Chang Han, one of the professional generals who served Ch'in; in the twelfth month of 208 B.C. the two men were put to death by some of their confederates who may have had cause to resent their claims to leadership and authority.[24] But despite his failure, Ch'en She was shortly to receive official recognition and credit for his initiative. In 195 B.C. the first of the Han emperors made provision for mourning ceremonies to be held in his memory, in perpetuity. They were still being held at the time when the *Shih-chi* was being compiled, perhaps a hundred years later.[25]

At this stage the disciplined forces of the Ch'in empire were well able to crush local rebellions of this type; but movements of a far more serious nature were already taking place elsewhere. For some generations members of the Hsiang family had served in the armies of the old kingdom of Ch'u, and it was from this source that a more professional type of leader was to emerge, in the persons of Hsiang Liang and his nephew Hsiang Yü. Possibly in response to the example of Ch'en She, they had staged an uprising in the ninth month of 209 B.C., murdering the Ch'in governor of K'uai-chi.[26] From the modern Kiangsu they were able to muster a force which may have numbered several thousand, and to proceed in a northwesterly direction over the Yangtse and the Huai rivers. At much the same time, their strength was increased by the arrival of Liu Pang and a force which he had assembled.

Liu Pang was a man of peasant origins who came from P'ei, in central China. He had been entrusted with the authority of a low-ranking local official, but had thrown off these responsibilities while leading a force of convicts to work. He then took two irrevocable steps to demonstrate his independence: He put the Ch'in magistrate of P'ei to death; and he adopted the title of Lord of P'ei (P'ei-kung).[27] Early in his career he had won the loyal companionship of supporters such as Hsiao Ho, Ts'ao Shen, and Fan K'uai, who were later to take a prominent part in molding the new empire.

23 *SC* 8, p. 349 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 333). It is of interest to note that this term carried sufficient authority to feature as a means of identifying years in a nearly contemporary record of astronomical observations. The term appears in documents found in tomb no. 3, Ma-wang-tui, which may be dated ca. 168 B.C. See Hsiao Han, "Ch'ang-sha Ma-wang-tui Han mu po-shu kai-shu," *WW*, 1974.9, 43; and Liu Nai-ho, "Po-shu so chi 'Chang Ch'u' kuo hao yü Hsi-Han fa-chia cheng-chih," *WW*, 1975.5, 35–37.

24 *SC* 16, p. 765; *HS* 1A, p. 12 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 42).

25 *SC* 8, p. 391 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 399); *SC* 48, p. 1961; *HS* 1B, p. 76 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 140).

26 *SC* 7, p. 297 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 250).

27 *HS* 1A, p. 10 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 39–40).

In the fourth month of 208 B.C. they threw in their lot with Hsiang Liang's armies.

Under the leadership of Hsiang Liang and Hsiang Yü, the threat to Ch'in took on a much more forceful character. They made a bid for recognized authority by reconstituting the old kingdom of Ch'u (sixth month, 208 B.C.),[28] choosing as king a grandson of a former ruler who had suffered grievously from Ch'in's cruelty. Possibly they selected him in a deliberate attempt to stir up antagonism against Ch'in and to evoke sympathy for those whom it had oppressed. The capital city of the new kingdom was established at P'eng-ch'eng, on the banks of the river Ssu.

At the same time a number of other kingdoms were being formed as heirs to those of the Warring States period: Ch'i and Yen in the east, and Wei, Chao, and Hann in the center. The government of Ch'in perhaps realized that the moment had come for decisive action and sent one of its most able generals, Chang Han, to recover the lost territory in the east and to destroy the insurgents. His initial success in northern China was halted at the city of Chü-lu, a stronghold of Chao to which he proceeded to lay siege. Such was the importance of the city, which commanded one of the routes that led to the heart of Ch'in territory, and such was the resistance to the Ch'in, that both Ch'i and Yen sent relief forces from farther east, and the king of Ch'u sent a body of troops under the overall command of his general Sung I.[29]

From the siege of Chü-lu, Hsiang Yü emerged as China's most able and prominent military personage. His uncle Hsiang Liang had been killed in battle, and Sung I was failing in his task of relieving the city. By a bold stroke Hsiang Yü had Sung I killed (eleventh month, 207 B.C.) and himself assumed overall command of the forces arrayed against Ch'in. With the defeat of the Ch'in forces and surrender of Chang Han (seventh month, 207 B.C.), Hsiang Yü established his reputation as a successful general, and his leadership won almost universal acknowledgment. His fame was further enhanced by the subsequent surrender of other Ch'in generals.[30]

While Hsiang Yü was engaged in battle at Chü-lu, the king of Ch'u had been directing a further attack on Ch'in by sending Liu Pang westward into Kuan-chung, the original power base of Ch'in. By ignoring the easier and obvious pass which led the way into that stronghold, Liu Pang succeeded in penetrating into the heart of the Ch'in stronghold (eighth month, 207 B.C.).[31] At this juncture he could well have congratulated himself on the

28 *HS* 1A, p. 14 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 45).
29 *SC* 6, p. 273 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 210).
30 *HS* 1A, pp. 17f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 49f.).
31 *HS* 1A, p. 21 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 54).

completion of a successful venture, for prior to 208 it had been agreed that the first officer to effect an entry into Kuan-chung would be rewarded by being declared its king.[32] In addition, events in the Ch'in capital of Hsien-yang prepared the way for Liu Pang's eventual success. Li Ssu had been eliminated from the scene, thanks to the machinations of Chao Kao (seventh month, 208 B.C.). After assuring himself of the loyalty of his personal following, Chao Kao then had the second Ch'in emperor murdered (eighth month, 207 B.C.), replacing him with Wang-tzu Ying, son of the Second Emperor's brother. It is significant and characteristic of the times that the new ruler was known by the title of *wang* (king), rather than that of *huang-ti* (emperor),[33] in recognition of the fact that China was once more in the hands of several monarchs rather than those of a single sovereign. Surprisingly enough, the new king managed to gain the upper hand by contriving the death of Chao Kao (ninth month, 207 B.C.). When Liu Pang succeeded in defeating the Ch'in forces at Lan-t'ien, the king surrendered (tenth month, 206 B.C.); Liu Pang now found himself in command of Kuan-chung and of the imperial capital of Hsien-yang.

According to our sources, the behavior of the city's new master was exemplary, but it is possible that historians have invested his actions with some measure of nobility so as to contrast them with those of his rivals. Liu Pang, we are told, offered the population the abolition of the harsh penal code of Ch'in, and replaced it with a very simple charter that merely specified the punishments due for murder, injury, and theft.[34] To prevent looting and violence, he had the palaces and armories of the city sealed, subject only to the seizure of state documents by Hsiao Ho, one of his most able supporters and later his chancellor. The evidence of nearly contemporary documents found elsewhere in China suggests that these may well have included statements of legal procedure, registers of land and taxation, or maps with the aid of which the administration and defense of the Ch'in empire had been maintained.

Liu Pang now awaited his orders from the king of Ch'u; however, about two months after his entry into Kuan-chung, Hsiang Yü arrived on the scene. In contrast with Liu Pang's generosity and discipline, Hsiang Yü had the king of Ch'in murdered, together with his family (twelfth month, 206 B.C.). He had the palaces of Hsien-yang set on fire after dividing their treasures among his officers, and he allowed his troops to desecrate the mausoleum of the first Ch'in emperor.[35]

Of perhaps greater significance than his immediate actions in Hsien-yang

32 *HS* 1A, p. 16 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 47).
33 For these titles, see Chapter 1, pp. 53f.
34 *HS* 1A, pp. 22f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 55f.).
35 *HS* 1A, pp. 27f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 64f.).

were the measures which Hsiang Yü took to reconstruct the political fabric of China after some four years of rebellion and fighting; in this respect it would seem unlikely that the historians have led us astray by reason of prejudice, for they would have had no motive for doing so. It is evident that, far from conceiving a centralized empire as the ideal type of polity, Hsiang Yü envisaged a return to the conditions that had prevailed before the unification, or even before the emergence of the seven major kingdoms of the fourth and third centuries. In place of an empire or those seven kingdoms and their institutions, Hsiang Yü sought to create no less than eighteen minor kingdoms that would form a confederacy; he himself, as king of the nineteenth kingdom, would be the leader of the confederacy.[36]

Possibly Hsiang Yü was consciously adopting the policy of divide and conquer that was later to characterize many institutions of imperial China. In establishing the small kingdoms, he was ready and able to satisfy the powerful leaders of the day, whatever their origins had been, and to utilize the services of able men, whatever their affiliations had been. To ease his own advancement, he had the king of Ch'u eliminated – first by having him accept the superior title of I-ti (ninth month, 206 B.C.), and next by removing him to a remote provincial town where he was assassinated (tenth month, 206 B.C.). In the meantime Hsiang Yü himself assumed a title which called to mind the princes who had claimed the political hegemony of China from the seventh century onward:[37] He chose King-protector of western Ch'u (hsi Ch'u pa-wang). Ch'u was itself divided, along with Chao, Ch'i, Yen, Wei, and Hann, to form eighteen separate kingdoms; and Hsiang Yü decided to exercise his overlordship from his home ground of P'eng-ch'eng. These measures were put into effect in the second month of 206 B.C.

Three of the eighteen kingdoms were set up in the territory that had formed the homeland of Ch'in, and which Liu Pang had been the first to enter. This was the metropolitan area that lay within the passes, which was now placed under three surrendered Ch'in generals, Chang Han, Ssu-ma Ch'in, and Tung I. The territory of Han-chung, which lay across the Ch'in-ling range of mountains, to the south of Kuan-chung, was now apportioned to Liu Pang. Possibly Hsiang Yü hoped that settlement in this remote area would deter Liu Pang from threatening his own security; in the event, it was from the name of this area that Liu Pang was to adopt his dynastic title, once he had settled the score with Hsiang Yü: Already he was known as the king of Han.

36 *HS* 1A, p. 28 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 65f.). *HS* 13, pp. 366f., sets out the history of the kingdoms month by month in tabular form.

37 *HS* 1A, p. 28 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 65).

A process that had started as a series of localized rebellions against the exactions of Ch'in officials now developed into a contest for mastery between two men. Shortly after his entry into Kuan-chung, Hsiang Yü had been advised to have Liu Pang put to death, but nothing had come of the plans to execute such a deed.[38] Quite apart from such evidence of ill faith, Liu Pang had just cause to resent the denial of the land within the passes that had been promised to him. Biding his time for a while, he was soon able to take an opportunity to bring about the defeat of his rival and the seizure of his territories.

Liu Pang opened his campaign in the fifth month of 206 B.C. He soon succeeded in entering Kuan-chung once again, and in securing the defeat or submission of the three kings who had been established there by Hsiang Yü. He now set about organizing these territories into commanderies which extended both to the north and the northwest, into Kansu; and from his base at Yüeh-yang he took steps to establish his rule on a sound foundation. Some of the altars at which Ch'in had worshipped were abolished and replaced by those dedicated to the soil on behalf of Han (second month, 205 B.C.). The population was allowed free use of the orchard land, parks, and lakes formerly reserved for the imperial house of Ch'in, and two years' exemption from tax and service was granted.

Hsiang Yü's murder of I-ti, ruler of Ch'u (tenth month, 206 B.C.),[39] provided Liu Pang with an ideal pretext for setting out to defeat Hsiang Yü; he could claim that he was punishing a regicide. He had already advanced as far as Lo-yang when he received a report of the assassination, and he immediately dispatched an appeal to the other kings to join the cause of justice. Liu Pang seized the opportunity of advancing right into the city of P'eng-ch'eng to strike a blow at Hsiang Yü's base. But the tables were soon turned: Liu Pang found himself besieged by Hsiang Yü and defeated in battle, and it was only thanks to a storm that he was able to make his escape.[40]

Liu Pang's fortunes had reached a low ebb. No more than a few dozen horsemen had succeeded in escaping with him from P'eng-ch'eng; some of the kings who had been glad to link their fortunes with his had taken the opportunity to defect or to join the cause of his adversary; and Hsiang Yü had been able to secure some of Liu Pang's closest kin as hostages. His recovery was due largely to the efforts of Hsiao Ho and Han Hsin. Left to hold Kuan-chung while Liu Pang marched east, Hsiao Ho was able to recruit new forces and gather fresh supplies to repair the deficiencies in Liu

38 *HS* 1A, p. 24 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 60).
39 *HS* 1A, p. 32 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 72).
40 *HS* 1A, p. 36 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 79).

Pang's ranks; Han Hsin, who had served Liu Pang as a field commander, secured important territories in central China, thus enabling Liu Pang to establish his base at Hsing-yang.

Hsing-yang was a city of strategic importance; it was situated just above that point on the Yellow River where the great stream branched northeast to flow toward the sea. Nearby lay the famous Ao Granary, filled with grain from the fertile lands of the great plain between the Yellow River and the Huai; to the west of the city was the route to Kuan-chung. But the proximity of the Ao Granary proved of little value to Liu Pang. Once again Hsiang Yü was able to invest the town where his adversary lay (fourth month, 204 B.C.).[41] City and granary were isolated from one another, and supplies ran short in Hsing-yang. Thanks to a ruse, Liu Pang was able for a second time to escape the encircling net of his enemy, but once again he was accompanied by a mere handful of cavalrymen.

Despite his military advantage, however, Hsiang Yü could not command an overall superiority, particularly as Han Hsin by now had succeeded in winning over much of eastern China. As a reward for his efforts, Liu Pang had Han Hsin invested as king of Ch'i (second month, 203 B.C.).[42]

According to our account, at one point the two leaders confronted one another.[43] Hsiang Yü offered to settle the issue by single combat; Liu Pang replied by upbraiding Hsiang Yü for his crimes and asserting his preference for a decision reached by a full trial of military strength. Nonetheless, in 203 the two men actually reached a formal agreement to divide China between them, with Liu Pang acknowledged as lord of Han in the west, and Hsiang Yü as lord of Ch'u in the east. Hsiang Yü restored to Liu Pang the members of his family whom he held hostage and the two parties withdrew their forces to their respective bases.

It is hardly surprising that this agreement did not survive intact for long; both protagonists were able to regroup their forces in the areas where their authority was best established and to prepare for the next round in the struggle. It was actually Liu Pang who broke the terms of the agreement, at the instigation of some of his supporters. They believed that Han was in the stronger position; that Ch'u's troops were exhausted; and that an ideal opportunity had arrived for striking a swift, decisive blow at Hsiang Yü. The final phase of the struggle took place at Kai-hsia, in modern Anhui province, where Liu Pang's forces had succeeded in encircling Hsiang Yü. In graphic and dramatic terms, the *Shih-chi* recounts how Hsiang Yü succeeded in escaping through Liu Pang's lines, until eventually he was left

41 *HS* 1A, p. 40 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 84).
42 *HS* 1A, p. 46 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 92).
43 *HS* 1A, p. 44 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 89).

with but twenty-eight followers and, with a great show of courage, committed suicide.[44]

Kao-ti's initial settlement

With the defeat and death of Hsiang Yü, in the twelfth month of 202 B.C., Liu Pang could proceed to establish his authority as undisputed master of China. Ch'u had been defeated and its lands surrendered; there was no outstanding leader to thwart Liu Pang's ambitions; and it seemed that his confederates had taken possession of lands and established themselves as kings therein on his behalf. In almost all respects save that of provincial organization, Liu Pang's administrative measures followed the example of his imperial predecessors of Ch'in; as yet there was little difference between the two imperial regimes in the policies they pursued or in ideological terms.

Liu Pang was now (second month, 202 B.C.) induced by his confederates to accept the title of *huang-ti*, or emperor.[45] His claim to the title rested on his practical achievement of winning control of the world. Although there is some reference in the documents to the moral qualities that were requisite in an emperor, they do not imply that the position was regarded as a gift conferred by Heaven. In this respect, the episode and its treatment bear a marked resemblance to that of the accession of the first Ch'in emperor in 221 B.C. It may be contrasted with some of the imperial accessions which took place from the time of Wang Mang onward and which specifically linked temporal rule with the dispensation of Heaven.[46] In the same way, Han accepted Ch'in religious practices. The new emperors were to worship those powers (*ti*) in whose honor altars had been erected for some time and who had been served by the kings, and perhaps the emperors, of Ch'in. Indeed, as early as 205 B.C. the king of Han had confirmed his attention to these cults. He had insisted that services should be held in honor of black, in addition to those maintained for the four other powers of white, green (or blue), yellow, and red. His action clearly demonstrated that the new regime would pin its faith to the same patron symbol, water, as had been adopted under the first Ch'in emperor.[47]

44 *SC* 7, pp. 333f. (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, pp. 316f.); and *HS* 31, pp. 1817f.

45 *HS* 1B, p. 52 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 99f.).

46 See B. J. Mansvelt Beck, "The true emperor of China," in *Leyden studies in Sinology*, ed. W. L. Idema (Leiden, 1981), pp. 23–33; and Michael Loewe, "The authority of the emperors of Ch'in and Han," in *State and law in East Asia: Festschrift Karl Bünger*, ed. Dieter Eikemeier and Herbert Franke (Wiesbaden, 1981), pp. 89–111. See also Chapter 13 of this volume.

47 *HS* 25A, p. 1210. For the significance of this action, see Chapter 1, pp. 77f., 96f. above and pp. 737f. below; and Michael Loewe, "Water, earth, and fire – the symbols of the Han dynasty," *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens/Hamburg*, 125 (1979), 63–68.

One of the first acts of the new emperor, Kao-ti, was to proclaim a general amnesty, together with measures for rehabilitation; this followed the general demobilization of his troops, and was dated in the fifth month, 202 B.C. The edict was designed to win the loyalty of the population; it announced measures to restore law, order, and security, and to distribute material relief to the people. The inhabitants were to return to their places of domicile and recover their old farms; those who had been sold into slavery in time of famine were to be redeemed; and exemption was granted from certain forms of tax. On the positive side, the emperor agreed to honor the privileges due to those who had received orders of aristocratic rank, and announced a general bestowal of these marks of social distinction.[48] The value of these honors lay in material advantages such as exemption from some forms of state service and mitigation of some of the punishments specified by the laws. In addition, the emperor ordered certain grants of land to be made.

The principle behind these bounties derived directly from Ch'in practice, or the so-called Legalist theory of government, which laid down specific rewards in return for services rendered to the state. Edicts granting these bounties recur at various times in Han history, sometimes accompanied by the grant of a general amnesty. In particular, these bounties were given on imperial occasions such as accessions, the nomination of an imperial consort, or the coming of age of the heir apparent.

The new emperors of China maintained the system of central government that had evolved under their immediate predecessors. Three senior statesmen (*san kung*) were directly responsible for advising the emperor. Ranking below them were the nine ministers (*chiu ch'ing*), whose duties corresponded with defined branches of the administration, and who were supported by a staff of subordinates and ancillary offices. This scheme was essentially identical with that of the Ch'in dynasty. It was to remain in force throughout Han, subject to the growth of a private secretariat which served the emperor's immediate needs, and which at times bypassed the authority of senior officials. In addition, the three senior statesmen were soon reduced to two, as after 177 B.C. appointments to the office of supreme commander (*t'ai wei*) were exceptional.[49]

A significant feature of Han government lay in the deliberate division of authority between two or more senior officials. While the chancellor held

48 For the orders of honor (*chüeh*) and their use as an instrument of government, see Chapter 1 above, p. 37, and pp. 157f. below; Chapter 7 below, p. 485; and Michael Loewe, "The orders of aristocratic rank of Han China," *TP*, 48:1–3 (1960), 97–174.

49 See Hans Bielenstein, *The bureaucracy of Han times* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 10. For details of the complement of officials, see Chapters 7 and 8 below; and Wang Yü-ch'üan, "An outline of the central government of the Former Han dynasty," *HJAS*, 12 (1949), 134–87.

the highest of all posts, executive orders to implement major decisions had to pass through the hands of his colleague, the imperial counsellor; on exceptional occasions two chancellors, one of the left and one of the right, were appointed concurrently. Similarly, financial responsibility was divided between the superintendent of agriculture (*ta ssu-nung*) and the superintendent of the lesser treasury (*shao-fu*), and the same principle was applied to military dispositions. Thus, the troops stationed in the capital city were divided into those of the northern and the southern barracks, and general officers were often appointed in pairs (for example, of the left and of the right), to avoid the establishment and attendant dangers of a single overall command.

When the Standard Histories report appointments to senior positions in the government, such as chancellor or imperial counsellor, they imply that these derived from the emperor's own act, and in formal and constitutional terms appointments were presumably authorized in this way. But very often the sources preserve a silence regarding the motives and incidents that led to a choice of a senior official. In some extreme cases, appointments followed the disgrace or dismissal of a predecessor with whom the new incumbent had been at enmity. Sometimes they may be seen to be the outcome of intrigue, and at times it may be surmised that a nonentity was chosen to fill a senior post in order that others could enjoy the freedom of action and decision.

Some of those who reached the highest positions of authority owed their careers, or their promotion, to recommendation by a patron. Others were related to the imperial family, or the family of one of the imperial consorts, and such a relationship could subsequently affect a choice of policy. From perhaps 115 B.C., the steps taken to recruit candidates for the civil service were becoming effective, as officials responded to the call to present those persons who were marked by suitable moral standards or professional skills (see p. 153 below). Merit was coming to be as valuable as birth as a means of achieving appointment.

One of the tables incorporated in the *Han shu* (chapter 19) gives the dates and circumstances of appointment for senior officials, together with some details of their careers and how they ended. In these brief entries it is possible to observe the *cursus honorum* whereby a man would advance from a lesser to a greater post, such as from being a marquis (see pp. 126f. below) to superintendent of ceremonial (*feng-ch'ang*, or *t'ai-ch'ang*) or superintendent of the imperial clan (*tsung-cheng*), the only one of the nine senior posts reserved for a member of the imperial family. Other entries record the promotion of the governor of a commandery (see p. 123 below), or the superintendent of transport (*t'ai-p'u*), or the superintendent of state visits

(*tien-k'o* or *ta hung-lu*) to be imperial counsellor; and a number of imperial counsellors ended their careers as chancellor. The same table records the close of a career, either by honorable retirement or sickness, or sometimes as a result of violence, implication in a plot, or the accusation of crime. The table gives the figure of 120,285 members of the civil service for the year 5 B.C., from the lowest to the highest grades. But in the absence of a breakdown into individual posts and their actual incumbents, it is difficult to draw sound inferences from so bald a figure.[50]

Prime responsibility for the conduct of the new government was vested in the chancellor and the imperial counsellor, and it was to these two officials that decisions could be referred. On the immediate executive level, such responsibility rested with the nine ministers and their subordinates, and the scope of their responsibilities is defined, very briefly, in the list of established offices that is included in the *Han shu*.[51] Reports, or memorials, were presented either in writing or verbally by officials of the central government and the provinces, for consideration at the highest level; occasionally a direct request for advice or opinion would be forthcoming from the throne, and an official would present a studied reply. Positive orders or decisions were conveyed downward, from the emperor through the whole hierarchy of officials, in the form of edicts. These could be formulated as a direct statement and injunction from the emperor; sometimes they took the form of the single word "approved" which is reported to have been appended to proposals of senior officials or statesmen. It was not often that an emperor himself initiated a scheme for administration.

Han's choice of a capital city rested on the same principles as had that of Ch'in, those of strategic, practical advantages, rather than those of association with China's past glories. Both empires preferred a site that lay within the natural defenses of Kuan-chung to one whose claims rested on the cultural heritage of the house of Chou; the arguments of contemporary statesmen show that the issues were clearly understood at the time. Immediately after his accession, Kao-ti had indeed established himself at Lo-yang, but in the fifth month, 202 B.C., he yielded to the pleas of his supporters and moved to Ch'ang-an. This site (modern Sian) lay close to the Ch'in capital of Hsien-yang; it had been argued with conviction that it enjoyed strong natural defenses and a better access to supplies than Lo-yang.[52] New buildings were erected to display the imperial might, but the city's defensive walls were not completed until the next reign (190 B.C.). On several occasions during the dynasty, discussion ranged round the

50 *HS* 19A, p. 743. 51 See, for example, *HS* 19A, p. 726, for the superintendent of ceremonial.
52 *HS* 1B, pp. 54, 58 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 103, 108); and *HS* 40, p. 2032.

relative merits and ideological values of Ch'ang-an and Lo-yang, but no actual move was made until A.D. 25.[53]

Kao-ti's initial edict after his accession may have included a veiled reference to the severities of Ch'in administrative measures; he enjoined officials to use the laws for the purpose of instruction and edification, and not as an excuse for flogging or insulting members of the public. But as yet no formal steps were taken to mitigate Ch'in legal practices or to implement his earlier promise of a simple code with three principal provisions.[54] Amnesties were declared in 201, 198, and 195 B.C. (except for capital cases), and on the occasion of the death of the emperor in 195 B.C.

The organization of the provinces

The major difference between the systems of government of Ch'in and Han lay in the organization of the provinces. Deriving partly from necessity and partly from compromise, the scheme adopted by Kao-ti and his advisers in 202 B.C. soon became subject to modification; eventually it had been so transformed as to be hardly recognizable by the founders of the dynasty as the fabric of the empire they had created.[55]

The first Ch'in emperor and Li Ssu had resolutely organized their entire newly conquered empire into commanderies. These were placed under the control of governors (*shou*) who were subject to appointment and dismissal by the central government, and who were never allowed to hold their titles on a hereditary basis. But in the interval between the Ch'in and Han empires, Hsiang Yü had envisaged a fundamentally different scheme for the administration of China, as a confederacy of nineteen kingdoms with himself as overlord. With the reestablishment of a single imperial regime, Kao-ti sought to compromise between these diametrically opposing systems in order to satisfy the claims of those to whom he owed his success. Thus, the example of Ch'in served for central China, which was divided into thirteen commanderies and a further unit under direct central control, which included the capital city and the metropolitan area; different arrangements, however, prevailed elsewhere.

53 For Ch'ang-an, see pp. 130f. below; and Stephen James Hotaling, "The city walls of Han Ch'ang-an," *TP*, 64:1–3 (1978), 1–46. For Lo-yang, see Chapter 3, pp. 262f.; and Hans Bielenstein, "Lo-yang in Later Han times," *BMFEA*, 48 (1976), 1–142.

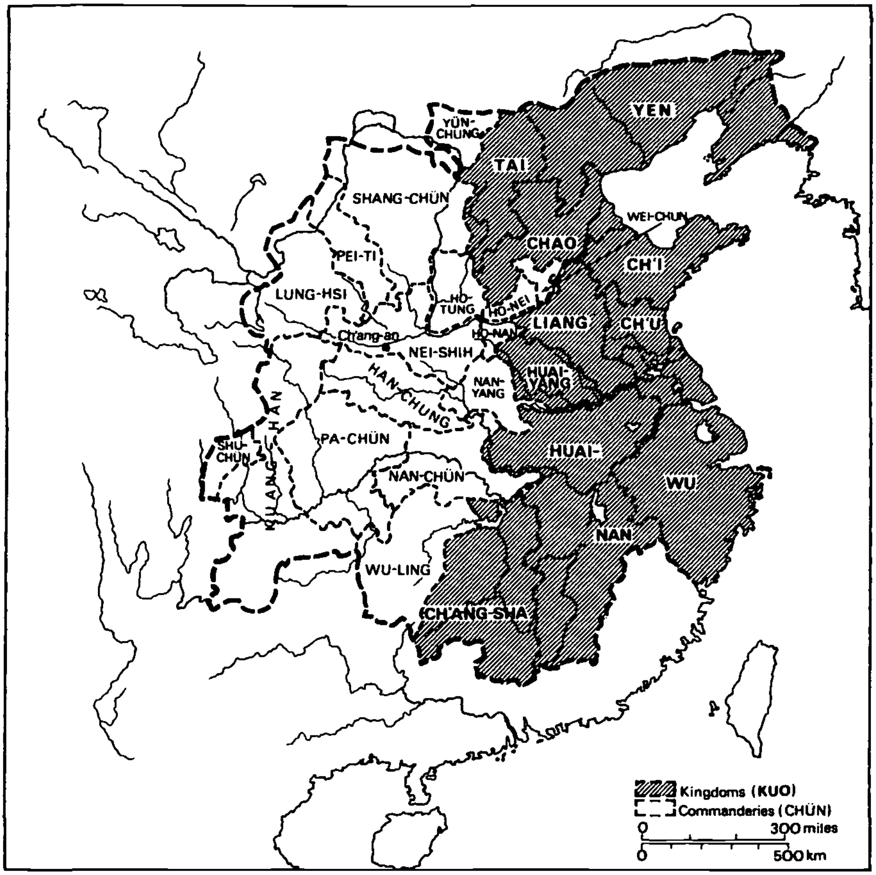
54 See p. 115 above.

55 For the titles, duties, and establishment of provincial officials, see *HS* 19A, pp. 741f. *HS* 28 lists the administrative units of the empire as they stood in A.D. 2, together with short historical notes whereby the earlier arrangements and assignments of territory may be reconstructed. For the theory and history of the kingdoms and marquisates, see the introductory passages to the tables which set out the successive holders in chronological order (*HS* 13, pp. 363–64; *HS* 14, pp. 391–96; *HS* 15A, p. 427; *HS* 15B, p. 483).

In the course of the civil wars, a number of Liu Pang's confederates had taken possession of some of the territories of the pre-imperial kingdoms and had declared themselves kings. Their existence had been acknowledged by Liu Pang; now that he was acknowledged emperor, he could not immediately deprive them of their hard-won gains if he wished to retain their support. In addition, Liu Pang stood in need of an efficient administration with which to collect taxation, maintain law and order, and protect China from external threats. In the circumstances, the emperor had little option but to confirm the existing kings in their positions and titles, which they could expect to transmit to their sons in due course.

It thus came about that in 202 B.C. a total of ten kingdoms had been established in a large area lying to the east and north of the fourteen administrative units that lay under the emperor's direct control in the center (see map 3). The kingdoms controlled a far more extensive area than the commanderies and an even larger portion of China's people; provided that the loyalties of the kings could be assured, they would act as a valuable bulwark against local dissidents. Furthermore, in the north they were situated where the initial attacks of an enemy would be met, and they could thus protect the emperor and his government. However, the central authorities would be in grave danger should one or more of those who stood possessed of these large kingdoms make a bid for independence; these were men of proven worth as generals, some of them claiming to be the descendants of traditional royal houses of a bygone age. Their states were large and rich enough to sustain independence.

Kao-ti's problem, then, was how to retain the kingdoms, in view of their administrative advantages, while securing the loyalties of their rulers; how to delegate sufficient power to maintain security on the perimeter, while simultaneously retaining central control over the use of the armies and resources there. It was a problem destined to recur in various guises throughout China's history. In the Former Han it was hoped to solve it by eliminating those kings who were potentially dissident and replacing them with men who were bound to the emperor by family ties. By 196 B.C. all except one of the kings who had been acknowledged in 202 had been replaced by a brother or a son of the emperor, in a total of ten kingdoms. It was believed that they would be more likely to support his cause than men who came from different families. Some of the displaced kings were demoted to the rank of marquis; some defected to the Hsiung-nu (such as Lu Wan, king of Yen, in 195 B.C.); and one who staged a revolt was put to death. Only in one kingdom did there survive a line of kings that did not derive from the Liu family. This was in Ch'ang-sha, where Wu Jui had been installed in 203 B.C.; his last descendant died, without male issue, in



Map 3. The Han empire, 195 B.C.

157 B.C. One of the reigning emperor's sons was then enthroned in his place, and a new royal line was initiated.

About ten years after these events it was being claimed that Kao-ti had made a solemn compact with his supporters whereby a concerted attack would be launched on anyone who, not being a member of the Liu family, had nonetheless been set up as a king.[56] Such a principle, however, had already been in abeyance in the case of the kingdom of Ch'ang-sha; shortly it was to be violated in a conspicuous manner by the emperor's widow (the empress Lü). By the reigns of Wen-ti (180–157 B.C.) and Ching-ti (157–141 B.C.), the passage of generations had loosened the close bonds of

56 *HS* 18, p. 678; *HS* 40, p. 2047; *HS* 97A, p. 3939.

kinship that had once linked the kings with the emperor; by then they were insufficient to preclude the danger of dissidence.

In 195 B.C. some two-thirds of the Han empire lay under the rule of kings who owed fealty to the emperor; the emperor's own central government controlled sixteen commanderies,[57] and appointed their governors as occasion demanded. Each king presided over an administration which was a small-scale replica of the central government, with its chancellor, royal counsellor, and other functionaries. These officials were responsible for collecting taxes in the kingdom and for its defense; they were free, and even encouraged, to make their territories as productive as possible. The fealty of the kings to the emperor was marked by their obligation to render homage annually; they were also required to submit returns of the population of their territories and of the taxes which they had levied, a proportion of which they transmitted to the central government. Although they were responsible for raising and training armed forces, they were not entitled to mobilize them for active service without express orders from the central government.

At a lower level of administration, the commanderies of the central government were in general subdivided into counties (*hsien*); in addition, they also comprised a number of county-level appanages granted to individuals, called *hou*, which have sometimes been called marquisates, or nobilities.

Hou had featured as the name of a noble rank in the institutions of the pre-imperial age, but it was now used with a somewhat different significance. The marquisates formed the second of the two degrees of the Han peerage, of which the kingdoms formed the first. They also constituted the highest of the twenty orders of honor whose bestowal has already been mentioned as one of the emperor's acts of bounty.[58] As with the kingdoms, the establishment of the marquisates arose from two motives, the need to reward the emperor's officers and the need to bring the will of the government to bear as widely as possible throughout the empire. By 195 B.C., nearly 150 marquisates had been conferred on those of Kao-ti's supporters who had earned merit in a civil or military capacity. A list of the beneficiaries which has fortunately been preserved shows how these honors were passed from father to son until the line eventually died out.

The entries on the list cite the circumstances in which each title was conferred, and specify the extent of their material benefits. These were measured by the number of households from which the marquises were

57 This number, including the area administered by the metropolitan superintendent (*nei-shih*), had been increased from fourteen during the steps taken to reorganize the empire after 202 B.C.

58 See p. 120 and note 48 above.

entitled and obliged to raise taxation, part of which they retained as their emoluments; they transmitted the remainder to the central government. To collect these dues, the marquises called on their duly appointed retainers (for example, their *hsiang*) who, however, hardly enjoyed the same status as officials of the government, although they may have been responsible for much the same sort of work as was done by the officials of the counties. While the marquises may have owned land by personal right, this did not follow from the conferment of a title. The titles of the marquisates derived from the regions where those households from which they collected tax lay. Marquisates were also conferred for reasons other than service rendered in the course of founding the dynasty, such as by virtue of relationship to the kings or to an imperial consort. The subsequent history of the institution shows how later conferments could be made, or deliberately brought to an end, so as to serve political ends.[59]

Foreign relations

Some of the most stirring events of China's history mark the two decades that started in 210 B.C. – the collapse of the Ch'in empire, bitter civil warfare, and the establishment of the first of China's long-lasting dynasties. Within the empire, statesmen and generals were engaged in molding China's destiny and evolving institutions of government. At the same time, China's territorial integrity was subject to threat; members of the imperial family were themselves sometimes involved in external relations, which affected both the north and the south.

In the north a new leader of the Hsiung-nu, named Mao-tun, had profited from China's weakness and inability to concentrate adequate strength on the defense lines. The confederacy which he formed extended over lands which were immediately contiguous with the areas entrusted to the kings. As the kingdoms were interposed between the commanderies of the central government and China's potential enemy, the Han emperors could feel reasonably secure, so long as the kings remained loyal. But any sign that the kings might be ready to defect to the cause of the Hsiung-nu could bring alarm to Ch'ang-an; and such signs had already been noted in 201 B.C., when Han Wang Hsin surrendered to the Hsiung-nu.

It soon became clear that China could not hope to be free from attack. Kao-ti himself took the field against invaders in 201 B.C., and narrowly avoided capture by Hsiung-nu forces at P'ing-ch'eng. The Han government found itself unable to check further raids; powerful voices in Ch'ang-an

59 See pp. 157f. below.

spoke of the tactical advantages the Hsiung-nu enjoyed, and the Han government was obliged to agree to an accommodation. Very soon a Chinese princess was sent as a bride to the leader of the Hsiung-nu, partly by way of appeasement of a superior party, partly in the hope that the offspring of the marriage would in time be favorably inclined to the Chinese cause. At the same time, arrangements were made for the annual dispatch of valuable presents to the Hsiung-nu from China.[60]

In the south, no threat of positive animosity prevailed against China. Chao T'o, a native of northern China, had established himself as the independent king of Nan-yüeh. Strictly speaking, this area lay within the territory which Ch'in had claimed to rule, in Kwangsi and Kwangtung; but Han was in no position to challenge Chao T'o's action. As Chao T'o showed no sign of wishing to encroach on Han territory to the north (the kingdom of Ch'ang-sha), Kao-ti was ready to confirm him in his self-chosen position; in 196 B.C. he sent Lu Chia on a mission bearing imperial acknowledgment of the situation. The unassimilated tribes who inhabited other regions in the south and southwest were as yet not subject to Chinese penetration.[61]

There is no evidence to show that a government of China took any account of Japan at this time or that any exchange of visits had taken place. In Korea, which had been subject to Chinese cultural influence for some centuries before the Ch'in empire, an independent kingdom of Ch'ao-hsien had been established by Wei Man, a native of the kingdom of Yen. This occurred after the defection of the king of Yen to the Hsiung-nu, in 195 B.C. As yet there were no direct contacts between Wei Man and the Han government.[62]

THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE EMPIRE (195–141 B.C.)

Consolidation of imperial strength, administrative experiment, and the modification of institutions characterized the first seventy years or so of the Former Han period. During these decades, statesmen concentrated their efforts on reinforcing the authority of the central government within China, and there was little energy to spare for expansion or engagement with potential enemies. The policies of state were modernist in principle, being directed to the welfare of the new imperial order and with little sign of an appeal to older forms; but as yet such policies could not be pursued as intensively as became possible during the reign of Wu-ti

60 *HS* 1B, p. 63 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 115f.); *HS* 94A, pp. 3753f.
61 *HS* 95, pp. 3847f. 62 *HS* 95, p. 3863.

(141–87 B.C.), when material resources could be better exploited and the population more readily mobilized. A short-lived threat to the survival of the imperial family of Liu was followed by the reigns of two emperors, Wen-ti (180–157 B.C.) and Ching-ti (157–141 B.C.), whose characters and achievements long aroused the admiration of Chinese writers. They were credited with presiding over the government of a land and people who were well ordered. Wen-ti in particular received a high measure of praise for practicing frugality in the interests of the realm; possibly such compliments originated as a means of criticizing some of the later emperors for extravagant indulgence.

The main results of these years of consolidation were seen in the reduction of the size and strength of the kingdoms and the simultaneous advance of direct imperial control along the valleys of the Yellow and the Huai rivers. In addition, effective tax collection probably left the empire with far greater material resources at its disposal in 141 B.C. than had ever been collected before. The divisive threats had derived from the ambitions of the empress Lü, Kao-ti's widow, and her family, who succeeded in dominating the palace and the government for some fifteen years (195–180 B.C.).

The attempt to oust the Liu family was short-lived and unsuccessful, but it bears proportionately greater significance in view of its wide implications and its effect on subsequent history. At the time when the Lü family made its bid for power, the stability of the house of Liu was by no means assured; the dynasty had been founded for a mere decade. This period had witnessed the steady elimination of a number of potential rivals for power, but the Lü family was better placed than most to succeed where others might have failed. The incident is the first of many examples in Chinese history when an imperial consort or her family nearly brought a dynasty to an end. Usually such situations occurred at times when a duly enthroned emperor lacked sufficient strength or maturity with which to offset the influence of those who stood around him. At the same time, it is clear that the existence of an emperor, be he infant, junior, or weakling, was essential to a situation which permitted an empress dowager or ambitious statesman to dominate the court and promote their schemes.

As on similar occasions subsequently, the bid for power which the Lü family launched left China with a dynastic or constitutional problem; for the ordered line of succession to the throne had suffered from manipulation or derangement. As may be expected from China's historians, the incident has usually been described in terms of an unlawful usurpation, and those who finally expelled the empress were held up in honor and accorded privileged treatment. At crucial moments in dynastic history, statesmen have been able to cite the experience of the empress Lü by way of warning

of the dire consequences of permitting an empress dowager or a princess to rise above her station.[63]

The reign of Hui-ti (195–188 B.C.) and the fortification of Ch'ang-an

At an early stage in his career, Liu Pang had taken to wife a member of the Lü family, from Shantung. She bore him one son and one daughter, and in the year following his establishment as king of Han (205 B.C.), his son Liu Ying was nominated heir apparent.[64] No steps were taken to change the succession after Liu Pang's assumption of the title of emperor, although there was some talk of doing so. For Kao-ti had acquired several other consorts, and some of the other seven sons who had been born to them were more robust than the empress's boy. But despite the emperor's own inclination to nominate the son of another consort as his heir, it was the son of empress Lü who retained the title and duly acceded to the throne on Kao-ti's death, in the fifth month of 195 B.C. The emperor was between fifty and sixty years old at the time, and the immediate cause of his death is said to have been a wound received from a stray arrow that had struck him during the fighting against the king of Huai-nan in 195 B.C.[65]

The new emperor, Hui-ti, was a mere fifteen years old at the time of his father's death, and four years were to pass before he went through the official ceremony whereby he was acknowledged to have achieved manhood (191 B.C.). However strong he might have been in character, he could hardly have been expected to prevent the domination of the court and palace by his seniors. According to the Standard Histories, whose bias in this respect cannot but be in question, his mother was particularly wanton, oppressive, and cruel. She is said to have had Liu Ju-i, the son whom Kao-ti favored for the succession, poisoned and to have had the boy's mother murdered and then mutilated in a peculiarly revolting way, so that it shocked the emperor out of his wits and determined him never to meddle in affairs of state. The empress Lü is also credited with the murder of three other sons of Kao-ti who might have challenged her ambitions.[66]

Two significant measures were taken during Hui-ti's reign: shrines in memory of the late emperor were established throughout the empire, and the city of Ch'ang-an was fortified. The erection of shrines to honor Kao-ti's memory may have been intended to consolidate dynastic prestige by

63 See, for example, *HS* 36, p. 1960, for the reminder given by Liu Hsiang toward the end of Ch'eng-ti's reign (33–7 B.C.). See also Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, p. 301.

64 *HS* 1A, pp. 3, 38 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 30f., 81).

65 That is, Ch'ing Pu, one of the kings who was not a member of the Liu family, and who was replaced as king of Huai-nan by Liu Chang (196 B.C.). See *HS* 1B, p. 78 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 142f.).

66 *HS* 2, p. 88 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 178); *HS* 38, p. 1988; *HS* 97A, p. 3937.

strengthening the links between the emperor and the outlying regions of the realm, and their establishment provided a precedent which was followed at later times during the dynasty. In due course this was to cause embarrassment and consternation, as the number of imperial shrines and the expense of their maintenance grew out of all proportion; eventually the state of the nation required that their number should be reduced.[67]

On a number of occasions in Hui-ti's reign, labor forces were called out to build the walls of Ch'ang-an. For what they are worth, the figures specify that gangs of nearly 150,000 men and women were set to work on two occasions, each of which lasted for thirty days.[68] They were drawn from the immediate environs of the city, but at one time twenty thousand convicts were also drafted from elsewhere to assist. By the ninth month of 190 B.C. the work was completed, after some five years' effort. The occasion was marked by the general bestowal of an order of honor on male members of the population.

Surviving remnants of the capital of the Former Han empire lie to the northwest of the present city of Sian. It was laid out as a rectangular city, whose sides were set to face the four points of the compass but with some irregularities of shape, so that only the east side formed an uninterrupted straight line. Such irregularities may have been due to topographical features, or possibly to the needs of defense. According to a suggestion that may date from as early as the third to the sixth century, the uneven layout of Ch'ang-an's walls was designed to follow the figures of the constellations Ursa Major and Sagittarius; in this way the city would be closely linked with the more enduring pattern of the heavens. Whether this is so or not, different cosmological considerations affected the shape of the Later Han capital of Lo-yang; these had hardly been generally accepted at the time when conscripts were set to work on Ch'ang-an's walls.[69]

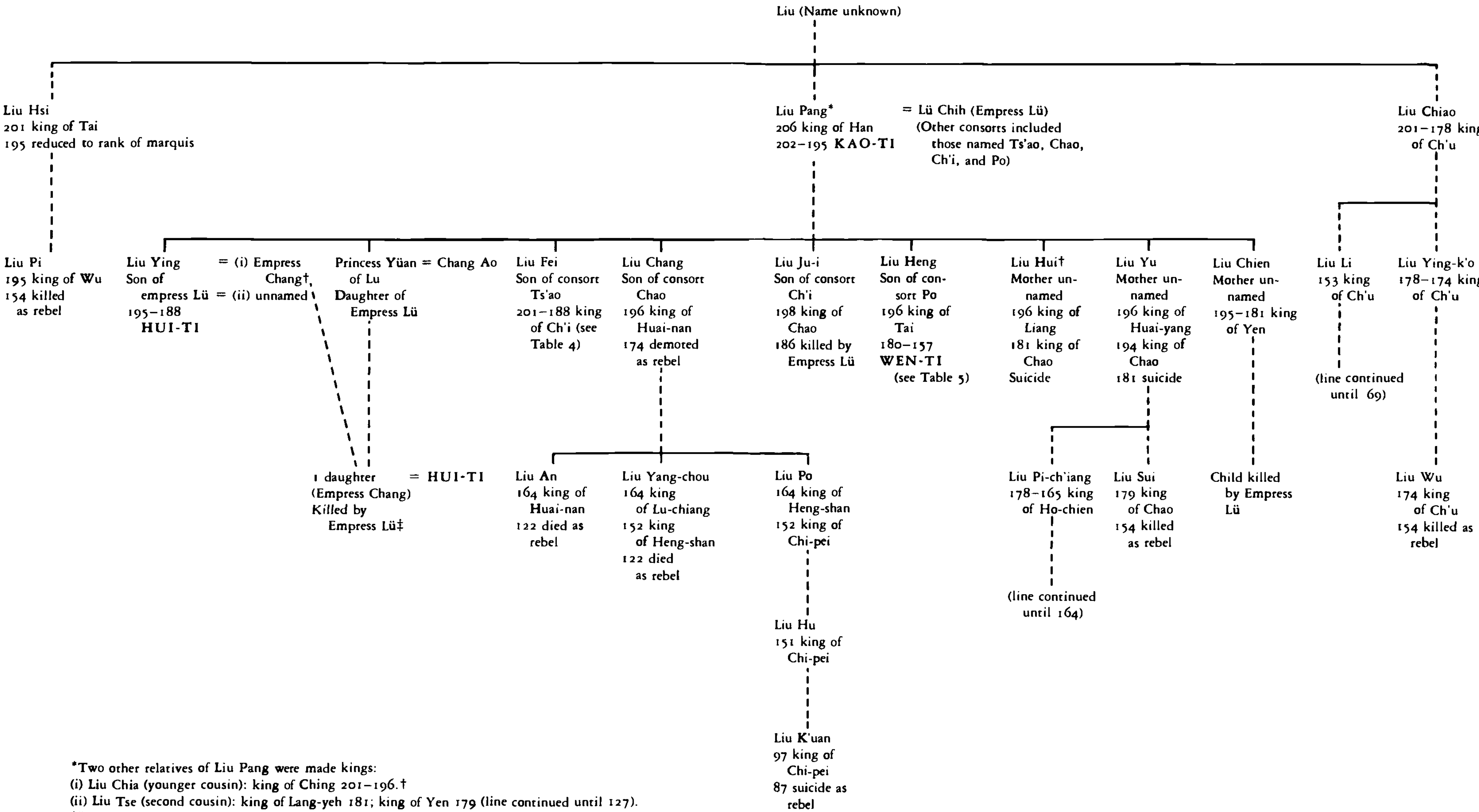
Eventually the four sides of the city each measured some 5 or 6 kilometers (3.5 miles) in length, and encircled an area of 33.5 square kilometers (13 square miles). From a base of over 16 meters the walls rose to a height of eight meters, where their width had been tapered to 12 meters. The principal imperial building, named the Wei-yang Palace, lay toward the southwest corner; other palaces, including one which was built outside the main walls, were to be added later. The engineers who laid out the city evidently worked on a grid plan which included 160 units, or wards, each 500 paces (693 meters) square, but it cannot be said for certain how far this

67 See. pp. 208f. below. 68 For state conscription of labor, see p. 151 below.

69 For the association with the Dipper, see Paul Wheatley, *The pivot of the four quarters* (Edinburgh, 1971), pp. 442f.; and Hotaling, "The city walls of Han Ch'ang-an," pp. 5f. For the plan of Lo-yang, see Chapter 3 below, pp. 262f.; and Bielenstein, "Lo-yang."

TABLE 3

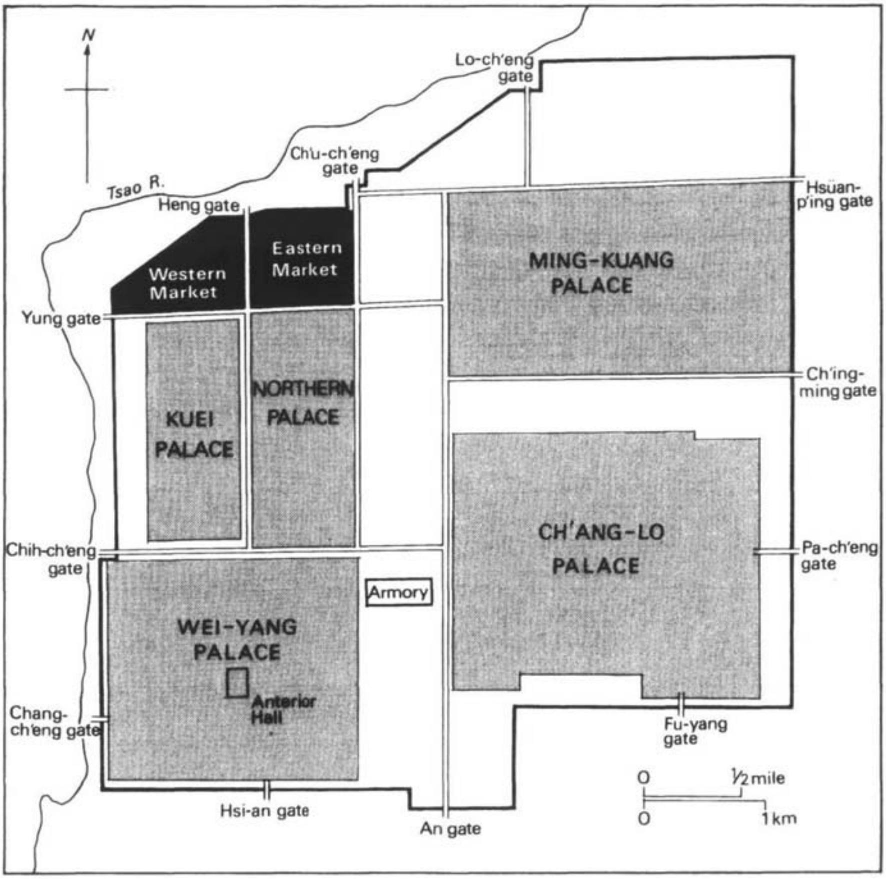
Descendants of Liu Pang



*Two other relatives of Liu Pang were made kings:
(i) Liu Chia (younger cousin): king of Ching 201–196.†
(ii) Liu Tse (second cousin): king of Lang-yeh 181; king of Yen 179 (line continued until 127).

†Died without male issue.

‡Hui-ti was succeeded by two infant emperors, not of imperial descent: (i) Liu Kung, son of one of the palace women, SHAO-TI KUNG 187–184; (ii) Liu Hung, king of Heng-shan, SHAO-TI HUNG 184–?180.



Map. 4. Ch'ang-an, capital of Former Han
After Wang Zhongshu. *Han Civilization.*

plan was implemented. Three imposing gateways were built in each of the four walls, probably flanked by defensive towers, whence a watch could be maintained. There are indications that each gate was built with three separate apertures or lanes, which could each accommodate the width of up to four vehicles.[70]

The city included royal lodges where the kings would reside during their annual visits to pay homage to the Han emperor. The opening of a western market in 189 B.C.[71] may imply that an eastern market had already been

70 For these conclusions, see Hotaling, "The city walls of Han Ch'ang-an;" and Wang Zhongshu, *Han civilization*, trans. K. C. Chang, et al. (New Haven and London, 1982), pp. 1–28.
71 *HS* 2, p. 91 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 184).

laid out; at a later stage there is an unconfirmed report of the existence of nine markets in all. These markets would have been operating under the supervision of officials. No realistic estimate can be given for the size of Ch'ang-an's population at this time.

Just when the western market was being inaugurated in Ch'ang-an, the Ao Granary was being put in order along the Yellow River valley. The granary had featured in the civil war (see p. 118 above), and it was presumably to repair the damage of those years that work was now begun. Other positive actions taken during Hui-ti's reign include mitigation of some legal prescriptions and repeal of the ban imposed during the Ch'in dynasty on possession of certain types of literature (191 B.C.). In foreign affairs Han still maintained a passive policy, and a member of the imperial family was granted the title and status of a princess in preparation for marriage to the leader of the Hsiung-nu (192 B.C.). In pursuance of the same policy of appeasement, the court acknowledged the existence of an independent king of Tung-hai, in Fukien, and graciously accepted gifts from Chao T'o, king of Nan-yüeh (192 B.C.).[72]

The empress Lü (188–180 B.C.)

Hui-ti died in 188 B.C. At the time he was no more than twenty-three years old, but there is no suggestion that his death had been due to foul play. His official empress was childless, and the child of one of his minor consorts was formally appointed emperor, known as Shao-ti Kung. After a mere three years, he was replaced by a second puppet, Shao-ti Hung, who was also still in his infancy.[73] These formal arrangements enabled the empress dowager Lü to assume responsibility for the empire with the powers of a regent. She could issue edicts under her own authority, and archeology has recently revealed a seal with which she may have signified her approval of such documents. The seal had been designed as a symbol of imperial majesty, being fashioned of jade and engraved with a term usually reserved for the use of emperors alone.[74]

The empress Lü refrained from arranging for her proclamation as empress in her own right. Her example was followed in the Later Han period, and on later occasions when a Chinese dynasty was dominated by an empress.

72 *HS* 2, p. 89 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 181).

73 The "young emperor" Kung (187–184 B.C.) is said to have voiced threats against the empress Lü, and to have died in prison. He was followed by the "young emperor" Hung (184–180 B.C.). The question was raised whether either of the boys was really a son of Hui-ti (see *SC* 9, p. 410, Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 438.)

74 See Ch'in Po, "Hsi-Han huang-hou yü-hsi ho Kan-lu erh-nien t'ung-fang-lu ti fa-hsien," *WW*, 1973.5, 26.

Nonetheless, she held unquestioned authority. She nominated four members of her own family as kings, in defiance of the oath said to have been sworn between Kao-ti and his followers; she also elevated six of her kinsmen to marquis and appointed others to posts as generals. In this way she made certain that she could command the forces which lay encamped in Ch'ang-an. Farther afield, however, she was less powerful. Her forces failed to prevent the Hsiung-nu from driving into Chinese territory. In 182–181 B.C. they invaded the commandery of Lung-hsi (southern Kansu), and in the following year carried off two thousand persons to captivity. Meanwhile, in the south the king of Nan-yüeh had taken advantage of China's apparent weakness. In an attempt to control the growth of his kingdom, the Chinese government had banned the export to Nan-yüeh of certain articles of particular value, such as iron manufactures. Angered by this act of discrimination, the king assumed the title of martial emperor of the south (Nan Wu-ti) in 183 B.C., thereby implying equality with the sovereign of China. Two years later he invaded neighboring Han territory in the kingdom of Ch'ang-sha.[75]

The empress Lü died in 180 B.C., but not before she had composed a valedictory edict appointing two members of her family to the most senior posts possible, chancellor of state (*hsiang-kuo*) and general of the army (*shang chiang-chün*).[76] Encouraged by these appointments, members of the Lü family determined to make a bid for the elimination of the imperial house of Liu. But their ambitions were thwarted. There still survived three of Kao-ti's descendants who held kingdoms in Ch'u, Huai-nan, and Tai; and these men were able to muster the support of other relatives and of those statesmen whose loyalties had not been suborned by the empress and her family. The king of Ch'i, grandson of Kao-ti, took the lead. With his own troops he marched to Ch'ang-an, after appealing to his colleagues of the other kingdoms for help; thanks to their concerted action, the Lü family was eliminated.[77]

Wen-ti (180–157 B.C.) and Ching-ti (157–141 B.C.)

Imperial stability and Liu Pang's system of kingdoms faced no less stern a test on the occasion of the expulsion of the Lü family than it had when the empress had seized power. Fundamental questions affected the imperial succession. It was by no means clear how far the degree of relationship to

75 *HS* 3, p. 99 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 199); *HS* 95, p. 3848.
76 *SC* 9, p. 406 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 428).
77 *HS* 3, pp. 100f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 200f.).

Kao-ti would affect an individual's claim or right to succeed; nor was it certain that the loyalties of the kings to the imperial system would transcend their own ambitions and interests.

Two of the possible candidates for the supreme honor, the kings of Tai and Huai-nan, were themselves sons of Kao-ti; the third, who was the king of Ch'i, was his grandson, but he could claim that his father had been senior to his uncles. Moreover, the kingdom of Ch'i had been established in 201 B.C.; his line was thus senior to those of Tai and Huai-nan, which had only been founded in 196.

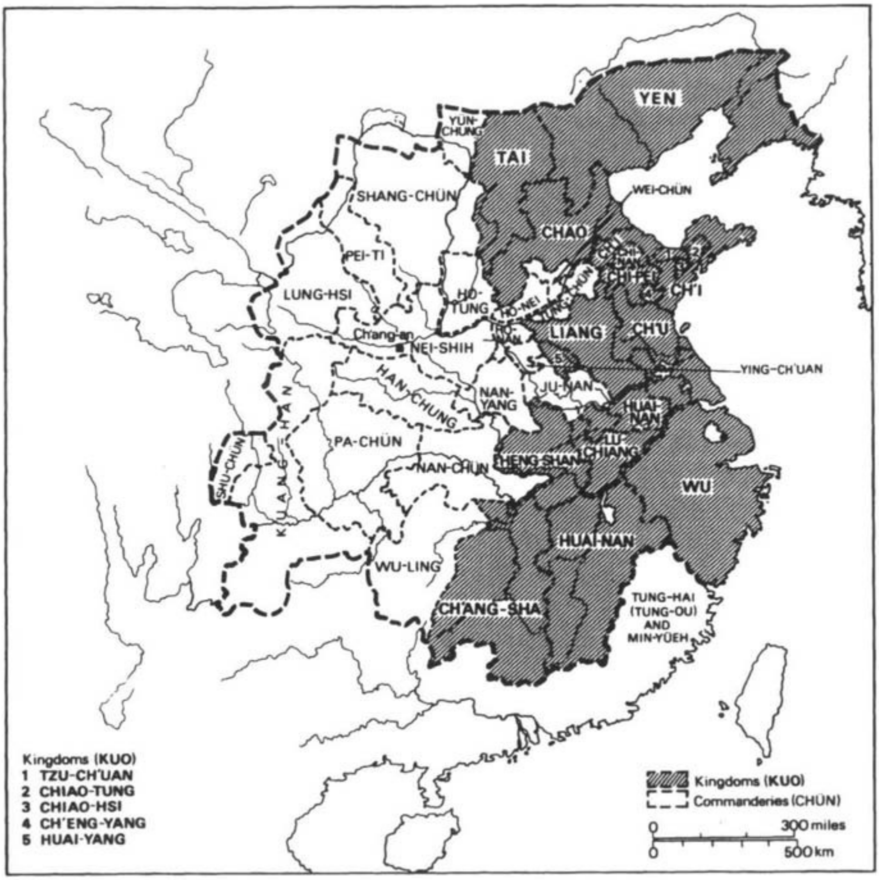
The king of Ch'i was also in a stronger position than the others. It had been due to his leadership that the family of Lü had been ousted, and it was his armies which had made their way to Ch'ang-an for the purpose. That he should have taken the initiative in these matters may be partly explained by the treatment that his kingdom had received at the hands of the empress; it had lost considerable territories, which had been formed into separate kingdoms for members of the Lü family.[78]

The motives that had prompted the king of Ch'i to take action cannot be determined for certain; possibly he was genuinely anxious to restore the system inaugurated by his grandfather; possibly his main objective was to secure the imperial throne for himself. Had the restoration of the Liu house been the king's prime objective, however, it may be asked why he delayed until after the empress's death. By calling out troops without the specific authority of the central government, he had acted *ultra vires*, and this step had not passed without criticism even among his own followers.

The proposal to enthrone the king of Ch'i met with the objection that his mother would be very likely to emulate the example of the empress Lü, and the same objection was raised against the candidacy of the king of Huai-nan, who in addition had not yet attained his majority. No such reservations affected the third candidate, Liu Heng, king of Tai, later known as Wen-ti. Not only was he judged to possess a sense of duty and clemency that would qualify him for his task, but his mother was also believed to possess sufficient nobility of character. A message was sent to the king from Ch'ang-an inviting him to assume the imperial throne. After a duly modest display of reluctance, Liu Heng set out from his kingdom to Ch'ang-an, where he lodged in the residence of the kings of Tai; shortly afterward he agreed to accept the imperial seal, symbol of his new title. By now the king of Ch'i had disbanded his troops and returned to his kingdom.

Wen-ti, as the new emperor was known, was the first of the Former Han emperors to reign for longer than a decade. His presence on the throne for a

78 For these events, see *HS* 4, pp. 105f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 221f.); and *HS* 38, pp. 1987f.



Map 5. The Han empire, 163 B.C.

period which just exceeded that of all previous reigns combined served to invest the empire with a sense of continuity and permanence that it had so far lacked. Dynastic stability was further strengthened by the peaceful transmission of his title to his son, born of the empress Tou in 188 B.C. and known as Ching-ti (r. 157–141 B.C.). Both reigns were relatively free of the dynastic problems that could threaten the existence of the empire; both reigns saw the introduction of measures designed to stabilize social and economic conditions and to consolidate the central government's authority.

That the court was free of direct interference in matters of state by an imperial consort or her relatives may have been due in part to the empress Tou's predilection for "Taoist" writings. She may have been more anxious

to propagate a quietist message and affect the welfare of the realm by those means than to participate directly in government. Her son Liu Chi, the future Ching-ti, had no option but to obey his mother's will and study the works of Lao-tzu. Her death in 135 B.C. can perhaps be taken as a turning point in Han politics, for it coincided with the close of a long period in which dynastic strength had been garnered and institutions modified to serve the needs of empire. Henceforth the modernist policies of state took on a more intensive character; the marked change toward positive and expansionist policies could hardly have won the approval of a devotee of the *Tao-te ching*.[79]

The reduction of the kingdoms under Wen-ti and Ching-ti

During the reigns of Wen-ti and Ching-ti, the authority of the central government grew markedly. Within a quarter of a century or so after Wen-ti's accession, imperial statesmen had realized the potential dangers of separatism; they had appreciated the need to control or eliminate some of the kings; and they had confronted the challenge successfully. The principal changes in the administrative shape of the empire were brought about in 164 and 154 B.C., and the difference may be seen by comparing the situations of 179 and 143 B.C. (see maps 3, 5, and 7, pp. 125, 138, 146–7).

In 179 B.C. the Han empire had largely reverted to what it had been at the end of Kao-ti's reign. The kings who had been installed by the empress Lü had been eliminated; either they had been replaced by members of the Liu house, or their territories had been restored to the units from which they had been detached. Once again the central government stood in direct possession of the metropolitan area and its adjacent commanderies, which were now nineteen in number, surrounded by eleven kingdoms. By contrast, the empire of 143 B.C. comprised the metropolitan area, forty commanderies and twenty-five kingdoms. Originally, the small number of commanderies had been protected by an arc of a few large kingdoms; by

79 For the empress Tou's taste for Taoist writings, see *HS* 88, p. 3592, and *HS* 97A, p. 3945. Recently discovered manuscripts from Ma-wang-tui, in central China, confirm that the extant text of the *Tao-te ching* is not substantially different from copies circulating during the reign of Wen-ti. In addition, the finds include texts which can be identified as deriving from the Yellow Emperor branch of Taoist thought and which had otherwise not been known. See Michael Loewe, "Manuscripts found recently in China: A preliminary survey," *TP*, 63:2–3 (1977), 118f.; Michael Loewe, "The manuscripts from tomb number three, Ma-wang-tui," in (a) *Proceedings of the International Conference on Sinology, section on history and archaeology* (Taipei, 1981), pp. 181–98; (b) *China: Continuity and change, papers of the XXVIIth Congress of Chinese Studies, 31.8–5.9 1980*, Zürich University (Zürich, 1982), pp. 29–57. See also William G. Boltz, "The religious and philosophical significance of the 'Hsiang Erh' *Lao tzu* in the light of the *Ma-wang-tui* silk manuscripts," *BSOAS*, 45:1 (1982), 95–117.

143 B.C., and even more markedly by 108 B.C., the writ of the central government ran over commanderies that were scattered throughout China, enclosing a larger number of small kingdoms as enclaves.

In general the kings were tempted toward independence from the center for two reasons. Some of the kingdoms lay in remote areas beyond the range of easy or quick communication with the officials of Ch'ang-an. Areas such as Ch'i or Wu had once supported independent states and possessed a wealth of natural resources; by exploiting such wealth a king could easily sustain his own independence, were he free of the obligation to render homage and tax to an emperor of Han. In the second place, the passage of time had altered the relationship between the kings and the emperor, and close family ties would not now automatically ensure the loyal support of the kings. Under Kao-ti, most of the kingdoms had been entrusted to his own sons. By 170 B.C. only three of the kings were sons of the reigning emperor; one was a grandson, one a great-grandson of Kao-ti; a son of Kao-ti's elder brother reigned in Wu, a grandson of one of his younger brothers in Ch'u; and a collateral relative was enthroned in Yen.

The reduction of the kingdoms was achieved partly by deliberate design, and partly by exploiting chance opportunities such as a king's rebellion or his death without a successor.[80] The larger kingdoms were split into minor units, and members of the Liu family who were closely related to the emperor were placed there as kings. On the occasion of a rebellion, the central government took over parts of a kingdom's territories and governed them as commanderies, and the original kingdom was then reconstituted on a smaller scale. Thus, between 179 and 176 B.C., the government took over part of Liang and administered it as the commandery of Tung; Chao, Ch'i, and Tai were weakened by the establishment of parts of their territories as the kingdoms of Ho-chien, Ch'eng-yang, Chi-pei, and T'ai-yüan; and by now the kingdom of Huai-yang, which had existed for a short time under Kao-ti, was governed as the three commanderies of Huai-yang, Ying-ch'uan, and Ju-nan. Of even greater consequence was the division of Huai-nan and the further reduction of Ch'i, which had been two of the most powerful units of the empire.

Although the southern boundaries of Huai-nan, as established in Kao-ti's reign, cannot be determined for certain, the kingdom probably stretched over a very extensive area. Following the king's plot to rebel in 174 B.C.,

80 Basic information regarding the succession and replacement of the kings and the division of large kingdoms into smaller units will be found in one of the genealogical tables incorporated in the *Han shu* (see *HS* 14). For the parts played by individuals, see biographical chapters, such as *HS* 35, 38, 44, 47, 53.

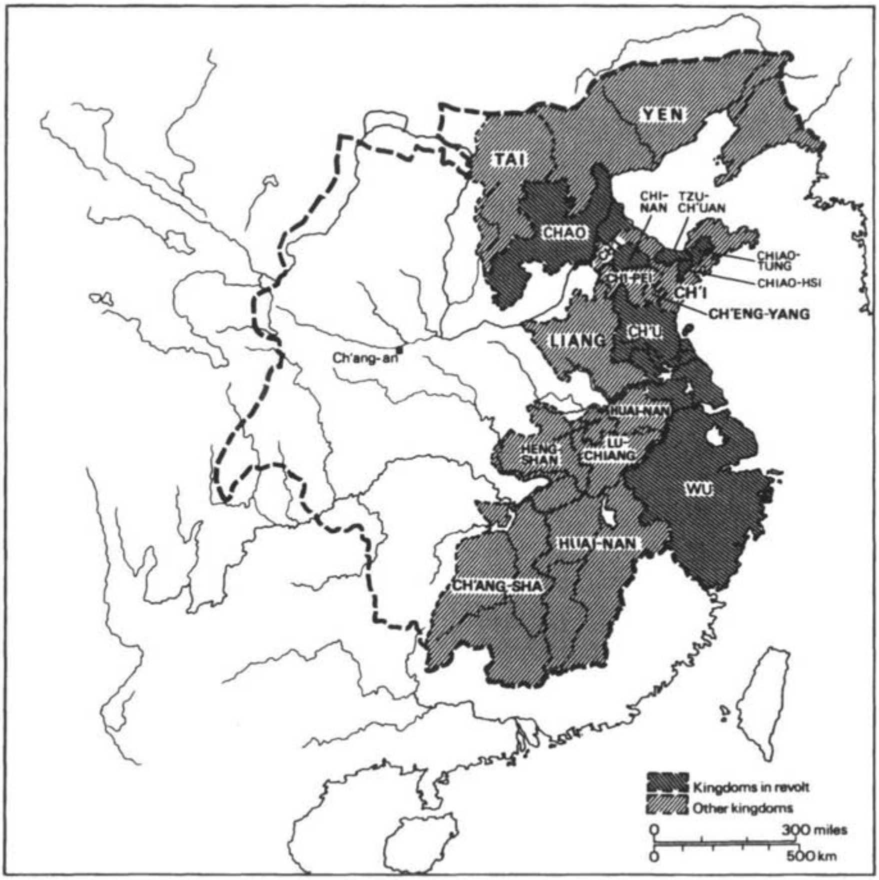
Huai-nan was apparently governed as commanderies. The kingdom was restored in 164 B.C. in greatly diminished form; two new kingdoms (Heng-shan and Lu-chiang) now separated Huai-nan into two portions. In the same year, the death of the king of Ch'i without an heir presented Wen-ti with an ideal opportunity for further reducing the strength of that kingdom, which thrived on abundant supplies of fish, salt, and iron, and supported silk manufacturies. By 163 B.C. no less than five additional kingdoms had been set up in the lands that had originally composed Ch'i. They were entrusted to grandsons of Kao-ti, who were thus members of a generation junior to that of the reigning emperor; simultaneously, one of their brothers became king of a much reduced Ch'i.

At the outset of Ching-ti's reign further steps were taken to isolate the kingdoms and reduce the size of their territories. The occasion occurred in 154 B.C., when the king of Wu staged a revolt against the imperial house in concert with some of his fellow kings. At the time he was aged sixty-two, but his disaffection was of long standing. His own son and designated heir had been killed at Ch'ang-an following a quarrel over a game of chess (*liu-po*) with the imperial heir apparent.[81] That same heir apparent, whom he regarded as his son's murderer, now reigned as emperor. In addition, there were obvious reasons why some of the kings of the east or southeast may have been ready to follow a lead to revolt; independence would allow them freedom to enjoy a kingdom's natural resources without the need to pay tax to the center; and outlying kingdoms such as Wu could harbor criminals or deserters who had fled from the attentions of imperial officials. Several statesmen had realized that the powers of the kings must be reduced in the long-term interest of dynastic safety.[82]

Whatever its motives, the revolt was launched on a far larger scale than any similar venture yet seen in Han history. Six other kings were persuaded to take part, including not only those of some of the minor units in the Shantung peninsula, but also those of the well-established houses of Chao and Ch'u. The central government, however, was ready for the threat, and may even have taken steps to provoke its outbreak, confident that it would win the day. By suppressing the rebels, the government was able to extend its commanderies along two wide paths that led from central China to the sea on either side of the Shantung peninsula. Subsequently, although the proud old kingdoms of Ch'i, Chao and Ch'u survived, they were sadly truncated and isolated, being now no more than shadows of their former

81 *SC* 106, p. 2823. The game of *liu-po* was possibly not only a pastime but also a means of divination. The quarrel may well have arisen as a result of the predictions that resulted from a round or two of the game.

82 See *HS* 14, p. 395; *HS* 48, pp. 2230f.; *HS* 49, pp. 2299f.



Map 6. Kingdoms in revolt, 154 B.C.

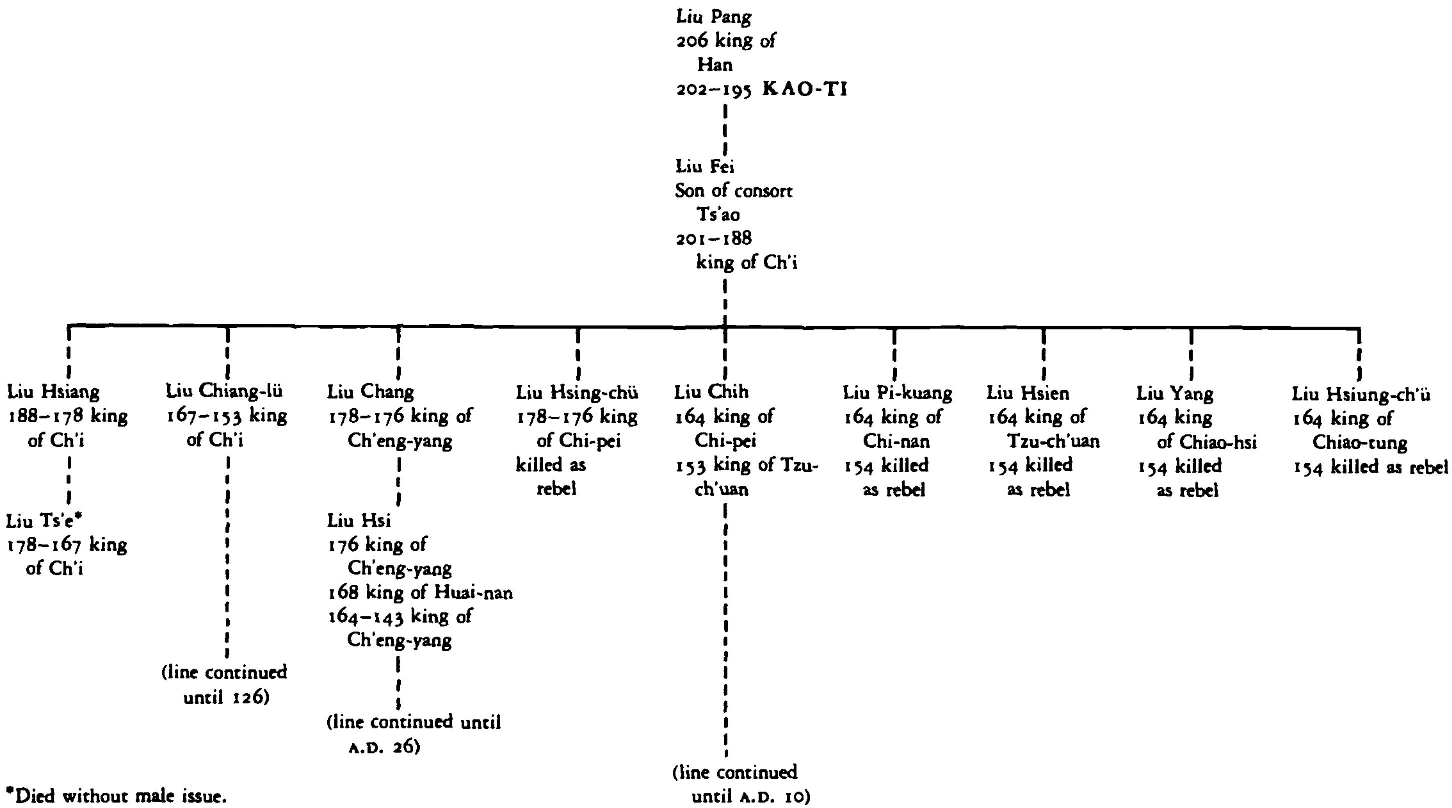
selves. Wu, where the revolt had started, was renamed Chiang-tu and placed under a new line of kings.

A further change took place at this time. The royal line of Ch'ang-sha, which had been started under Wu Jui in 203 B.C., had died out by 157 B.C.; when the kingdom was reconstituted in 155 B.C., its new king came from the Liu family. At last the terms of Kao-ti's oath, whereby only members of that family should be enthroned, were being observed *in toto*.

When the king of Liang died without a successor in 144 B.C., the kingdom was split into five units, each under the supervision of a separate king. It was probably at much the same time that Ching-ti's statesmen were able to dismember the remaining large kingdoms of the empire by

TABLE 4

Descendants of Liu Fei, King of Ch'i



*Died without male issue.

taking over territories from Tai and Yen in the north, and Ch'ang-sha in the south. These last changes were a new feature, for the new commanderies over which the government exercised direct control lay at the borders of the empire. No longer was the government content to rely on the kings to mount a defense against enemies or to act as a buffer against intruders; the central government evidently wished to maintain its own supervision over areas which were potentially both vulnerable and subversive.

Altogether, fourteen of Ching-ti's sons were enthroned as kings between 155 and 145 B.C.[83] It is remarkable that no less than nine of those kings reigned for twenty-five years or more, and one for as long as sixty-seven years. These facts suggest that many of Ching-ti's sons were not yet of age at the time of their elevation, and that they owed their positions to the belief that they were too young to cause trouble. One of the sons, Liu Ch'e, who was enthroned as king of Chiao-tung in 153 B.C., was only four at the time (by Chinese reckoning). In contrast to his brothers, he held his kingdom for some four years only. In 150 B.C. he was called to higher service, being nominated heir apparent to the imperial throne; he is best known in history under his imperial title of Han Wu-ti.[84]

In addition to reducing and splitting the territories of the kings, Ching-ti introduced a constitutional change which curtailed their powers and lessened their chances of building a following. Hitherto they had had a full complement of officials such as befitted a royal court, which gave them an effective administration. In 145 B.C. the status of their senior officials, or chancellors (*ch'eng-hsiang*), was lowered by a formal change of title (to *hsiang*), and they were directly appointed by the central government. All other senior posts in the kingdoms were abolished, and the number of their courtiers and counsellors was substantially reduced.[85] There remained a few measures yet to come to prevent the kings from initiating separatist activities; these were taken under Wu-ti.

Chia I and Ch'ao Ts'o

Two men, Chia I and Ch'ao Ts'o, deserve credit for advising their emperors to take firm measures, both to reduce the power of the kings and in other respects. Both may be described as being of a modernist frame of mind, as they wished to uphold the contemporary state of the realm and to strengthen the fabric of empire; neither can be regarded as a successful

83 See the entries in *HS* 14, pp. 409f.
84 *HS* 5, pp. 143–44 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 315–16); *HS* 6, p. 155 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 27). 85 *HS* 19A, p. 741.

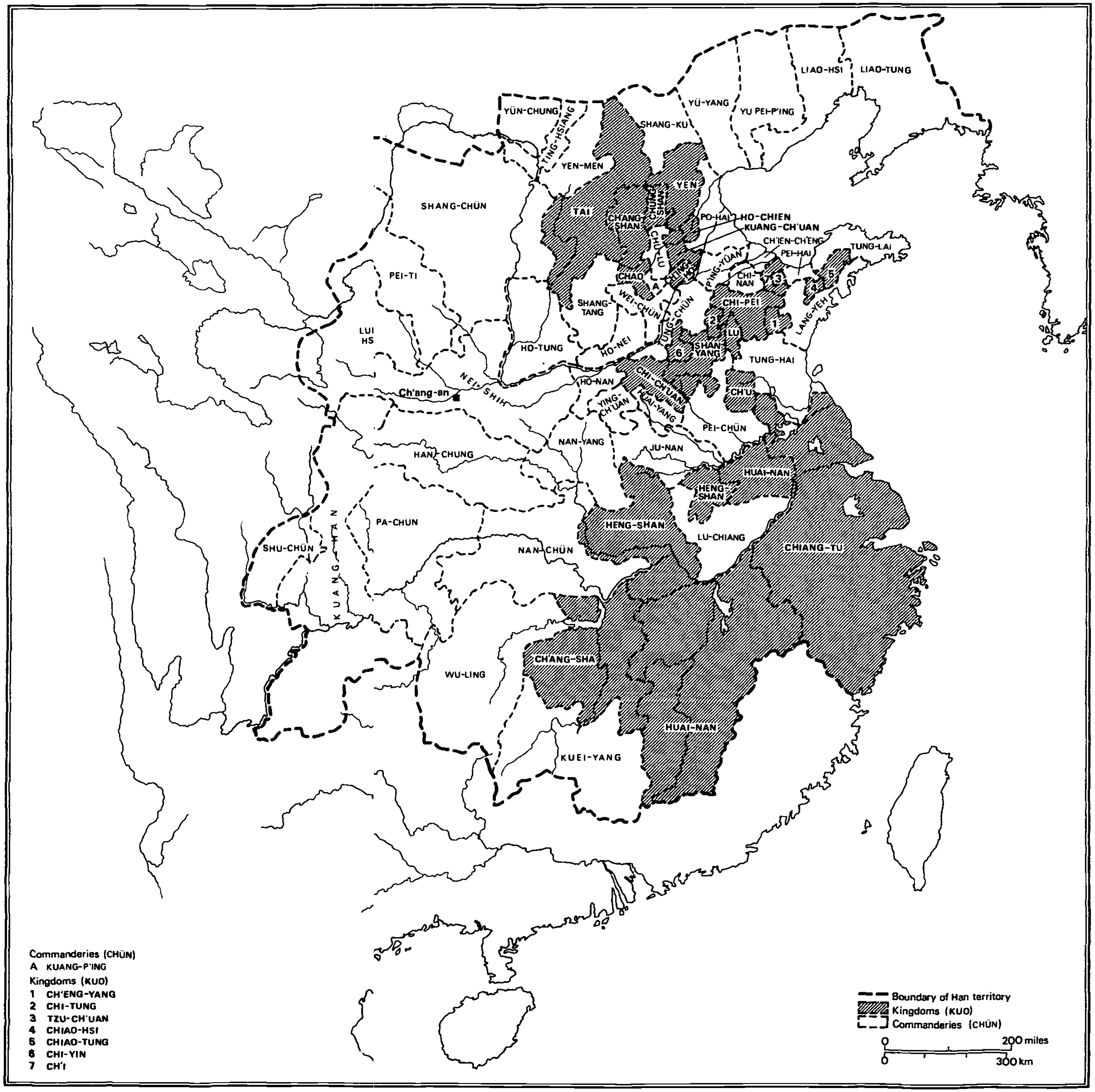
TABLE 5

Wen-ti and his descendants

Liu Heng = Empress Tou
180–157 WEN-TI (died 135)

- **Liu I**
  Mother unnamed
  178–168 king of Liang
- **Liu Wu**
  Son of Empress Tou
  178 king of Tai
  175 king of Huai-yang
  165–143 king of Liang
  - **Liu Mai**
    143 king of Liang
    (line continued until A.D. 10)
  - **Liu Ming**
    144 king of Chi-ch'uan
    138 demoted
  - **Liu P'eng-li**
    144 king of Chi-tung
    115 demoted
  - **Liu Ting***
    144 king of Shan-yang
  - **Liu Pu-shih***
    144–142 king of Chi-yin
- **Liu P'iao**
  Daughter of Empress Tou
- **Liu Shen**
  Mother unnamed
  178 king of T'ai-yüan
  175–161 king of Tai
  - **Liu Teng**
    161 king of Tai
    - **Liu I**
      132 king of Tai
      114 king of Ch'ing-ho
      (line continued until 65)
- **Liu Ch'i** = (i) Empress Po (died 150)*
  Son of Empress Tou = (ii) Empress Wang
  157–141 CHING-TI (Other consorts: Li, Ch'eng, Teng, Wang)
  - **Liu Ch'e**
    153–150 king of Chiao-tung
    150–141 heir apparent
    141–87 WU-TI
    (see Table 6)
  - 13 sons, all enthroned as kings:
    Liu Te 155 king of Ho-chien
    Liu O 155 king of Lin-chiang
    Liu Yü 155 king of Lu
    Liu Fei 155 king of Chiang-tu
    Liu P'eng-tsu 155 king of Chao
    Liu Fa 155 king of Ch'ang-sha
    Liu Tuan 154 king of Chiao-hsi
    Liu Sheng 157 king of Chung-shan
    Liu Jung 150 king of Lin-chiang
    Liu Yüeh 148 king of Kuang-ch'uan
    Liu Ch'i 148 king of Chiao-tung
    Liu Ch'eng 147 king of Ch'ing-ho
    Liu Shun 145 king of Ch'ang-shan

*Died without male issue.



Map 7. The Han empire, 143 B.C.

statesman. Chia I died without attaining a major office of state, and Ch'ao Ts'o was condemned to public execution.[86]

Chia I (201–169 B.C.) has almost become a legend in Chinese history, where he features as a paragon of a statesman whose virtues were not appreciated in his own time. He has been praised for his compositions in both prose and poetry, some of which survive; he expressed his strong approval for many of the ethical ideas and social concepts that were attributed to Confucius; and one of his most famous essays was concerned with the failings of the Ch'in dynasty. For these reasons, he has usually been classified among the Confucianists (*ju-chia*).

This description is not, however, entirely satisfactory. In respect of political ideas, Chia I was a staunch defender of the principles of empire, at a time when they depended on the example and institutions of Ch'in and the so-called Legalist philosophers. His criticism of Ch'in was not designed specifically as an attack on the aims and policies of Shang Yang, Li Ssu, or the first Ch'in emperor; rather, it was intended to show the failings of those men in the implementation of their principles, and to warn contemporary leaders of Han how to avoid their mistakes. Chia I believed that some of their failures arose from a rejection of the ethical ideals associated with Confucius, and he was anxious that his own masters should avoid the excesses which had led to Ch'in's downfall.

Chia I never rose to be more than a senior counsellor of the palace (*t'ai-chung ta-fu*), and it is said that his rivals prevented his promotion to a senior office of state. Appointed tutor to the king of Ch'ang-sha, he regarded himself as a failure and committed suicide at the age of thirty-three. But in the meantime he had tendered positive advice to Wen-ti on two critical matters. He had seen that it would soon be necessary to curtail the powers of the kings; he had also seen that a day of reckoning with the Hsiung-nu could not long be delayed.

Ch'ao Ts'o (d. 154 B.C.) was likewise a statesman dedicated to the cause of his empire, which he eventually served in one of the highest three offices of state, as imperial counsellor, 155–154 B.C. He is said to have taken a

86 The principal sources for these two statesmen are the biographies, *SC* 84, pp. 2491–2504 (Burton Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian of China: Translated from the Shih-chi of Ssu-ma Ch'ien* [New York and London, 1961], Vol. I, pp. 508–16); *SC* 101 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. I, pp. 517–32); *HS* 48, pp. 2221–66; and *HS* 49. In addition, see *SC* 6, pp. 276–84; *SC* 48, pp. 1962–65 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, pp. 219–36; and William Theodore de Bary, et al., *Sources of Chinese tradition* [New York and London, 1960], Vol. I, pp. 150–52); and *HS* 31, pp. 1821f. for Chia I's famous essay "Kuo Ch'in" (Where Ch'in went astray). For the views of the two statesmen on matters of economic policy, see *HS* 24A, pp. 1128–34 (Nancy Lee Swann, *Food and money in ancient China* [Princeton, 1950], pp. 152–69); *HS* 24B, pp. 1153–56 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 233–39). The collected essays of Chia I in the *Hsin shu*, which was not of his own compilation, are probably not as reliable as the versions included in the *Shih-chi* and *Han shu*; see Chiang Jun-hsün, Ch'en Wei-liang, and Ch'en Ping-liang, *Chia I yen-chiu* (Hong Kong, 1958).

personal part in redeeming the *Book of documents* from oblivion, and cannot therefore be wholly described as anti-Confucian. More forceful than Chia I, he was a practical statesman capable of analyzing contemporary problems in an orderly and systematic way. He advised Ching-ti to meet the challenge of the kings head on; he summarized the strategic and tactical considerations that had a bearing on relations with the Hsiung-nu; and he urged means of increasing agricultural production for the state. Like Chia I, he was well aware of Ch'in's mistakes and failings.

The difference between the two men was one of degree or emphasis rather than principle, and according to our sources their intellectual background differed. Ch'ao Ts'o is said to have been trained on the basis on the writings of Shang Yang and Shen Pu-hai; Chia I on that of the *Book of songs* and the *Book of documents*. In those of Ch'ao Ts'o's essays which are preserved in the *Han shu* there are no apparent references to the ethical ideals or social hierarchies associated with Confucian writings, and from the beginning of the Christian era he was classified among the Legalists (*fa-chia*).

Chia I and Ch'ao Ts'o tendered much the same advice to their emperors, and in both cases it was accepted; but whereas Chia I has been treated as a hero, Ch'ao Ts'o has only recently been praised by Chinese writers. The different treatment may be due to two reasons: the predilection of Chinese writers for those who are classified as *ju* rather than *fa*, and the circumstances of Ch'ao Ts'o's end. By 155 B.C. he had risen to the post of imperial counsellor, second only to that of chancellor; he died in the next year, a victim of his rivals' jealousies. It had been represented to the emperor that the removal of Ch'ao Ts'o would win back the loyalties of the disaffected kings; the falsity of such a claim stood clearly revealed when, notwithstanding Ch'ao's Ts'o's execution, the king of Wu and his allies launched their revolt against the center.

Internal policies

The isolation and reduction of the kingdoms left China with a cluster of small administrative units along the valleys of the Yellow River and the Huai River and in Shantung. The most productive parts of the empire had been subdivided into a comparatively large number of small units, over which officials could impose their authority. By about 150 B.C. the government exercised a more intensive type of administration than had been possible hitherto.

At the same time there are signs that the central authorities had taken to heart Chia I's warnings against oppressive policies. The populace benefitted from eight general amnesties between 180 and 141 B.C.; in 167 B.C., especially severe punishments involving mutilation were abolished; and

during the same period there were six general bestowals of orders of honor timed to coincide with important imperial occasions.

In 168 B.C. the standard rate of the tax on produce was reduced from one-fifteenth to one-thirtieth part; in the following year it was abolished altogether. When it was reintroduced in 156 B.C., the levy was kept at the lower rate of one thirtieth, which remained standard throughout the Han period. But despite these measures, we are told that enormous stocks of grain and coin had been accumulated as tax by the end of Ching-ti's reign. Part of Wen-ti's traditional image is that of an emperor determined to save his people from unnecessary expense, and ready to sacrifice his own indulgences for the good of the public.[87] In his time Chia I had made a plea for reducing expenditure on unnecessary luxuries; he had also envisaged measures that were adopted some fifty years after his death, whereby the minting of coin became a state monopoly.

By the end of Ching-ti's reign the foundations of Han government had been firmly established; the main principles of administration had been laid down; precedents had been set for the treatment which individuals could expect to receive from officials, and the pattern of such relationships had been formed. Imperial government was making a strong impact on the populace as a whole.

Perhaps nine-tenths of the population lived and worked in the countryside. Many of the peasants were accustomed to using wooden tools; if they were fortunate, iron may have been available. Vulnerable to the natural hazards of drought, flood, and famine, men and women could look for some relief from local officials and their granaries in time of disaster. A few favored individuals worked as craftsmen, adorning the palaces of the emperor or the kings, and serving their pleasure with delectable creations of jade, stone, bronze, or lacquer; or they may have been preparing the equipment that their masters needed after death, or embellishing mausoleums in readiness for their decease.

In formal terms, individuals were identified by name and place of domicile, together with a specification of any orders of honor that they might have received. This information named the commandery (or kingdom), county (or marquisate), and the actual district or hamlet where a man's home lay. It gave guidance to the administrative officials who were responsible for a man's occupation, service to the state, and behavior; by knowing a person's orders of honor, officials would realize the privileges that were his due should he find himself enmeshed by the laws of the land, and the degree of freedom he possessed from statutory obligations.

87 *HS* 24A, p. 1135 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 173f.). For an anecdote illustrating Wen-ti's thrift, see *HS* 36, p. 1951.

Usually individuals would come face to face with officials when they were registering the population for the census, enlisting recruits for the armed forces, or collecting tax. Such officials would be low-ranking civil servants from the man's district (*hsiang*) or hamlet (*li*); individuals would come face to face with the higher authorities of the county or commandery only in relatively serious cases of crime or misdemeanor. Apart from paying their dues of poll tax and land tax, adult males aged between twenty-three and fifty-six were subject to statutory service of two types.[88] They would spend two years in the armed forces, either training or on security duties in the home provinces, or possibly on frontier service; and they were liable to recall in times of emergency. In addition, a man would serve for one month in the year in the labor gangs, working at tasks that lay within the jurisdiction of local officials. He could be ordered to transport staple goods from field to granary, or from granary to major depot; he could be set to work building roads, or bridges, or on the upkeep of waterways. Sometimes corvée men would be sent to construct living quarters for the emperor or his tomb; and after the introduction of the state's monopoly of salt and iron in 119 B.C., corvée men were put to work in the mines. In some cases, it was possible to pay others to perform these duties as substitutes.

Involvement with the law could bring lengthy processes and severe punishments. There would be little hope of launching a successful appeal against a sentence, and the only chance of mitigation lay in the happy coincidence of an imperial amnesty, or in the privileges inherent in orders of honor accumulated through the years. Once sentenced, a man or a woman's life as a convict could be grim; lighter conditions prevailed in certain circumstances when part of a sentence had been served.

A new emphasis was placed on the observance of the state cults at this time. Wen-ti was the first of the Han emperors to pay a personal visit to worship at the shrines of the Five Powers (*wu-ti*) at Yung, in 165 B.C.; in the following year he attended services held at the newly erected shrines at Wei-yang. Ching-ti paid his respects at the religious sites of Yung in 144 B.C.[89]

Foreign relations (180–141 B.C.)

Both Chia I and Ch'ao Ts'o had expressed concern about China's exposure to the Hsiung-nu, and their fears had not been unfounded. In 177 B.C. China suffered a large-scale invasion through the Ordos territory which it was unable to withstand. A peaceful accommodation, including the ex-

88 The starting age for this form of service was at times lowered to twenty. See Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 49f.

89 See *HS* 4, p. 127 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 258–59); *HS* 25A, p. 1212; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 167f.

change of gifts, letters, and courtesies, was arranged between 176 and 174 B.C. But the peace was rudely shattered by a further invasion in 166 B.C., following the accession of a new *shan-yü*, or leader, of the Hsiung-nu. Enemy horsemen penetrated to within 120 kilometers of the city of Ch'ang-an. But no major engagement was fought with the Chinese defense forces, and annual raids on the Chinese borderlands followed. In the next few years this pattern of events was repeated almost exactly, with a renewal of friendly relations in 162 B.C., and their rupture by a newly acceded *shan-yü* in 160 B.C. At about this time we hear of the erection of a system of beacons and lookout stations by the Chinese, and no major incursions seem to have followed for a time. However, in 155 B.C. the central government was certainly aware of a potential danger; one of the rebel kingdoms might well be able to persuade the Hsiung-nu to cooperate in a challenge to the Han emperor. This consideration may have contributed to the decision to break up the kingdoms of the northern periphery.

In the south, China was able to act more boldly. Wen-ti sent a mission under Lu Chia to persuade Chao T'o to renounce the title of emperor which he had recently assumed; it is a mark of Lu Chia's success that, in agreeing to do so, Chao T'o expressed himself in terms that acknowledged the allegiance he owed as a subject of the Han emperor in Ch'ang-an.[90]

THE FULL FORCE OF MODERNIST POLICIES (141–87 B.C.)

Wu-ti's reign (141–87 B.C.) marks a new departure in Han history. The work of consolidation gave way to expansion and active initiatives; constructive policies were adopted to strengthen China and to solve its problems. Statesmen planned to improve the administration of the land and to reinforce the control of its inhabitants; to organize the economy and to increase the state's revenues; to dispel the threat of invasion and to promote Chinese interests in remote areas. By 108 B.C. Han armies had achieved their greatest advances, and new colonial ventures were being sponsored; religious ceremonies of 105 B.C. demonstrated the pride of achievement that the Han imperial house could boast.

These developments had not occurred without criticism or without overtaxing China's resources. Policies of retrenchment characterize the closing years of the reign; Han armies were no longer ever-victorious. There were signs that the imperial treasuries had been depleted; that law and order were not inviolate; and that the stability of the imperial house itself was subject to jealousies, rivalries, and violence.

90 *HS* 95, pp. 3849f.

Wu-ti was in his sixteenth year (Chinese reckoning) when his father died in 141 B.C. Nine years previously he had been nominated heir apparent, after intrigues within the palace and the displacement of Ching-ti's first choice of a successor. The new emperor was destined to preside over the fortunes of China for no less than fifty-four years, one of the longest reigns in Chinese imperial history. Many writers have ascribed to him personal qualities of vigor and initiative and held these to be responsible for the achievements of the reign,[91] but on closer inspection direct evidence to support such claims is far from clear-cut. Much of the initiative which was taken in these decades may be traced to the proposals of his statesmen, some of whom were related to the emperor's consorts; but Wu-ti himself took no personal part in the direction of the military campaigns for which his reign is famous. We read of him taking the leading role in religious ceremonies, supervising the final moments of repairs to the dikes of the Yellow River, or inspecting a victory parade. In addition, he is reported as seeking means to achieve immortality or listening to the persuasive talk of magicians and intermediaries. When troubles broke out between his consorts and their families (91 B.C.), the sixty-year-old emperor apparently could not quell the disturbances by force of character. Although there is no way of telling whether he enjoyed personal popularity, or could inspire devotion, the policies that became associated with his name soon encountered sharp criticism on the grounds of extravagance and unjustified sacrifice of life.

The tasks of administration

With the growing complexity and intensity of government that had accompanied the measures of Wen-ti and Ching-ti, a need for more recruits to the civil service had been developing; some of the earliest steps of the new emperor's reign were concerned with attracting candidates with suitable qualities. Already, in 178 and 165 B.C., calls had been made for the presentation of such persons to the throne; these were repeated in 141 B.C. in the form of an edict.[92] This directed the most senior officials to recommend candidates who possessed integrity and intelligence, or those who were capable of speaking their minds quite frankly on major issues. The call was renewed in 135 B.C. and on other occasions throughout the dynasty, with the intention that candidates could prove their talent by answering questions which were set, in theory, by the emperor in person.

91 See Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 7.
92 *HS* 4, pp. 116, 127 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 241, 259); *HS* 6, p. 155 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 27).

From these humble beginnings and the practical attempts to solve an urgent problem there was eventually to arise the highly complex system of examinations that formed so conspicuous a feature of China's imperial administration. Right from the start, candidates whose views reflected the writings of Shen Pu-hai or Han Fei suffered some discrimination. A further step that concerned the training of China's officials showed a positive bias in favor of the traditional writings which were being associated with Confucius. This was the establishment, in 136 B.C., of official posts for academicians, who were intended to specialize in the interpretation of five specific works: the *Book of changes*, *Book of songs*, *Book of documents*, the *Rites*, and the *Spring and autumn annals*. This all-important edict had significant consequences; the concept of the classical or canonical texts of China derived therefrom, and a precedent was set whereby these works formed the primary texts for educating officials. From 124 B.C. it was ordered that a quota of fifty pupils should be sent to the academicians for training; there is no means of estimating how effectively this order was implemented.[93]

The regular equipment of an official comprised a writing brush, an ink slab, a knife, and a seal. He wrote his reports in the fairly recently evolved *li-shu*, a style of written character that was less cumbersome and elaborate than that of the pre-imperial age, and that suited the new forms of stationery. Routine documents were prepared on narrow strips of wood bound together by hemp tapes. Silk was reserved for the inscription of special documents; these could be copies of certain literary texts, drawn up with an eye to calligraphic beauty, or material such as maps and diagrams, which a series of wooden strips could not accommodate. The knife was used for erasure, either in case of error or so that the wooden pieces could be scraped clean and reused. With his seal the official closed his reports, pressing the imprint into the small clay tablet by which the roll of strips was fastened; and the seal acted as a means of authenticating the documents.

Much of the time and effort of officials, both in the central government and the provinces, was spent in drawing up routine reports or gathering the basic information needed for administering an empire. Clerks transcribed copies of imperial edicts and calendars for distribution to the commanderies and counties. In local offices, the incumbents would prepare their registers of the population and the land, on which the annual census was based. They made out returns for tax collected, and account books to prove the scrupulous care with which they levied their dues or paid out sums for official expenses. Sometimes such documents were kept in duplicate. Other officials of the empire were engaged in drawing up the passports, or iden-

93 *HS* 6, pp. 159, 171f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 32, 54).

tity cards, which officials needed to present in the course of their lawful travels through points of control.[94]

Fragments of official documents dating from the reign of Wu-ti and later indicate the manner in which Han officials conducted their business; there are also some very few examples of maps, both topographical and military, that were used in government service. Some of the chapters of the Standard Histories consist of summaries based on the labors of that untold number of clerks and officials who staffed the agencies of the government.[95] Other chapters include the texts, usually abbreviated, of documents that emanated from higher echelons of the service, such as direct proposals for administrative action or criticisms of policies promoted by other officials.

The degree of responsibility varied greatly in different parts of the service. The formal chain of hierarchies ensured that responsibility was shared and that its scope was both clearly defined and duly recognized. In this way junior officials were protected from being charged with the failures of their seniors; at the same time, there may have been a tendency to discourage initiative. Some of the most responsible positions in the civil service were those held by the senior officials, or governors, of the commanderies. Many of the commanderies were distant from the capital, and their governors needed to take decisions without constant consultation; they bore final responsibility and authority for both civil and military affairs. Many of these senior officials must surely have felt isolated from the joys of Chinese civilization and the congenial company of their compatriots; a comparison may be drawn between the style of life of Han officials posted, for example, to the Han commanderies in Korea, and that of Roman officers passing their lives in the villas and outposts of Britain.

During Wu-ti's reign a new method was introduced for enumerating years. Hitherto these had been counted in separate series, which started from the first complete year of each emperor's reign (for example, Wen-ti 1, Wen-ti 2 corresponded to 179, 178 B.C., and so on); but from 113 B.C. onward, the government began the custom of proclaiming an expression, or reign title, by which years were to be defined, and which was changed every few years. The system was used partly for convenience; partly to affirm certain characteristics, qualities, or aims claimed for the dynasty;

94 Documents of this type were first found in the remains left by the officials and forces who organized China's defenses in the northwest; see Michael Loewe, *Records of Han administration* (Cambridge, 1967). The early finds have more recently been followed by considerably more important caches from sites in the same region, which await publication. For other examples of documents found more recently in central China, see Loewe, "Manuscripts found recently in China," *TP*, 63:2–3 (1977), p. 104; and for the Ch'in period, A. F. P. Hulsewé, "The Ch'in documents discovered in Hupei in 1975," *TP*, 64:4–5 (1978), 175–217; *Remnants of Ch'in law* (Leiden, 1985).

95 See, for example, *HS* 28, which lists the administrative units of the empire with some details of their size and extent.

and partly to commemorate important events. Thus the discovery of ancient bronze tripods at Fen-yin, in 113 B.C., had been regarded as a highly auspicious sign of dynastic felicity. By adopting the term *yüan-ting* (The Very First Tripod) as a teign title, the government was advertising its good fortune in receiving so marked a sign of blessing. The title was introduced retrospectively, so that the first year of the period Yüan-ting corresponded with 116 B.C. A number of terms were introduced, again retrospectively, for defining the years of Wu-ti's reign that had preceded 116 B.C. From now on it became customary to adopt a new title every few years. Because these titles appeared on most state documents, they fulfilled the role of political slogans by reminding the readers of events of dynastic importance, marking the observance of religious ceremonies, or indicating the mood or attitude of the government. The system remained in force until the end of the imperial era.[96]

Provincial changes and the regional inspectors

During Wu-ti's reign, significant changes were made in local administration. The size of the commanderies and kingdoms was reduced and a number of new commanderies were founded following the colonial expansion of the reign. Between 135 and 104 B.C., the metropolitan area was divided into four units; between 125 and 111 B.C., four of the large commanderies of the petiphery were fragmented to establish five additional new commanderies. One kingdom, named Ssu-shui, was established in a very small part of Ch'u (115 B.C.); between 136 and 114 B.C., fourteen of the kingdoms were reorganized or suffered loss of territories that were taken over as commanderies undet the central government. Perhaps the best known of the kingdoms to be affected was Huai-nan, which was brought to an end in 122 B.C., following the revolt and subsequent death of the king. He is known to posterity, however, not so much for his revolt and the fate of his kingdom, as for his contribution to learning. He had assembled at his court a body of consultants to hold academic discussions on matters of philosophical and scientific interest; the fruits of their deliberations were duly compiled in the *Huai-nan-tzu*, a book which provides the main source of our knowledge of Taoist thought in the Former Han period.

96 For doubts regarding the date when the tripods were actually discovered, and the retrospective adoption of reign titles, see Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 71, 121. Examples of reign titles which bear a special significance at this time may be seen in *yüan-feng* (The Primary *Feng* Ceremony), which marks the emperor's ascent of Mount T'ai in 110 B.C.; and *t'ai-ch'u* (The Grand Beginning), which exhibits the conscious feeling of imperial pride in 104 B.C. For reign titles which commemorated fortunate phenomena, see p. 191 below. As distinct from the early practice, by the time of the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties one reign title was used for the whole extent of an individual emperor's reign.

As a result of these changes and of military and colonial expansion, the empire of 108 B.C., which comprised the two units of the metropolitan area, some eighty-four commanderies, and eighteen kingdoms,[97] probably included a larger area than at any other time during the Han period (see map 8, pp. 166–67). In addition, Han officials were set up in areas on the frontier where non-Chinese tribes had acknowledged some degree of Han sovereignty. The tribes, however, retained considerable independence; Chinese officials could not operate effectively in the strange environment of the borders, where the sedentary Chinese way of life was anything but habitual. Some of these peripheral areas were known as dependent states (*shu-kuo*), and the central government included commissioners who were responsible for their affairs.

A further innovation followed the establishment of so many additional commanderies during Wu-ti's reign. In 106 B.C. thirteen regional inspectors (*tz'u-shih*) were appointed.[98] They were responsible directly to the central government, and each one was charged with inspecting a specified region of the empire that included a number of commanderies and kingdoms. They investigated the manner in which the emperor's government was being conducted, and reported back directly if they observed evidence of oppression, inefficiency, or corruption. One peculiar feature of the office was the status of the inspectors, who ranked considerably lower down the scale than the governors whose work they were invited to control; it can only be supposed that the inspectors may, in certain cases, have been open to bribery themselves. As yet the establishment of these officials did not involve the creation of the very large provincial units that evolved in later imperial days.

Marquisates and the orders of honor (chüeh)

Whatever the steps that had been taken to weaken the powers of the kings, they still enjoyed a high status; as members of the imperial family, they ranked above all officials of the realm and over the marquises. If the style in which they were buried may be taken as an indication, the way of life to which they were accustomed can only have been sumptuous. The precious bronzes and other treasures buried in the tombs of the king and queen of Chung-shan between 113 and 104 B.C. bear witness to their wealth; the

97 The exact figure cannot be given, as full information of the dates when some commanderies were founded is not available.

98 *HS* 6, p. 197 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 96f.); *HS* 19A, p. 741. The original complement of eleven officials was supplemented by the addition of two more for the perimeter (Shuo-fang and Chiao-chih). In addition, the metropolitan area and a few adjacent commanderies were put under the inspection of a similar official, colonel (internal security) (*ssu-li hsiao-wei*), from 89 B.C.

jade suits in which their bodies were encased show the respect paid to their rank in their lifetimes and the readiness of their relicts to spare no expense in providing for their well-being after death.[99]

Wu-ti's statesmen instituted several legal devices to discourage the kings from harboring thoughts of independence. Even before the rebellion of the kings of Huai-nan and Heng-shan (122 B.C.), it was ordered that the marquisates, which, it will be recalled, were held on a hereditary basis, should be conferred on the younger sons or brothers of the kings.[100] These were royal relatives who would not themselves succeed to the kingdoms, and the suggestion was intended to split up the interests of the royal families. The emperor could claim that he was acting generously and bounteously by bestowing these honors; the sons and brothers of the kings would now acquire some independence, and would be responsible for local administration within certain defined areas. As those areas lay within the major jurisdiction of the commanderies, the central government could itself supervise the activities of the newly created marquises.

Marquisates had been conferred on the relatives of the kings on previous occasions, but on a somewhat limited scale. As against the 27 marquisates of this type created between 200 and 145 B.C., no less than 178 were bestowed during Wu-ti's reign. Marquisates were also used as an institutional device to reward imperial officials or to win the loyalties of foreign leaders. Of 75 other marquisates bestowed by Wu-ti for merit, 18 were given specifically as rewards for military service; and 38 more were conferred on leaders of the Hsiung-nu, Nan-yüeh, or other peoples who had been conquered in battle and surrendered to Han arms. Acceptance of a marquisate implied acknowledgment of the Han emperor's sovereignty; no code of honor prevented a vanquished general from placing his service at the disposal of his conqueror and receiving due reward for loyalty to his new master. From the Chinese point of view, the bestowal of an honor of this type was a means of settling a powerful enemy and winning his support.

In addition, marquisates were sometimes given to strengthen the position and status of an imperial consort's family; but as yet very few had been conferred for this reason.[101]

A number of marquisates were deliberately brought to an end in a

99 The fullest description of these tombs will be found in Chung-kuo she-hui k'o-hsüeh-yüan. K'ao-ku yen-chiu-so, Ho-pei sheng wen-wu kuan-li-ch'u, *Man-ch'eng Han mu fa-chüeh pao-kao* (Peking, 1980).

100 *HS* 6, p. 170 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 51); *HS* 15A, p. 427; *HS* 64A, p. 2802. See also p. 126 above.

101 For details of the conferments of the marquisates and the succession of holders of each lineage, see *HS* 15A, 15B (sons of kings), 16, 17 (meritorious officials), and 18 (relatives of imperial consorts).

famous incident of 112 B.C. By then, many of those which had been given by Kao-ti for services rendered during the foundation of the dynasty had died out, but there still survived a number whose incumbents could hardly claim that they deserved the same privileges and honors which their forbears had merited. In addition, the circumstances and needs of 112 B.C. differed somewhat from those of 202 B.C. At the outset of the dynasty, the marquisates seem to have acted as a means of extending the emperor's administration; the newly created marquises had been ordered to proceed to their designated areas, pacify them, and raise taxes there. But by 112 B.C. it is likely that the measures taken to encourage recruitment to the civil service were bearing fruit. Since greater numbers of trained officials were now available, there was perhaps less need to depend on the successors of the original marquises for help in governing China. Whatever other motives may have existed, a purge of almost all surviving holders of Kao-ti's marquisates was carried out in 112. A technical failing in their conduct at one of the annual ceremonies proved sufficient grounds for declaring their nobilities to be at an end.[102] After this incident, no more than seven of the original marquisates remained.

The marquisates were the highest of the twenty orders of honor (*chüeh*), all of which were originally designed as rewards for services rendered to the state. The principle may be traced to the theories propounded by Shang Yang and Han Fei; and both in Wu-ti's reign and previously they were given for services of either a civil or a military nature. In addition, there were occasionally general bestowals of orders on the entire population as an act of imperial bounty; but these occasions were fairly uncommon, as compared with later practice, amounting to only twenty-three between 205 and 78 B.C. The benefits accruing from the orders were attractive (exemption from some forms of state service and mitigation of punishments), and the Han government was well placed to offer them in return for specified acts of service. Thus, Ch'ao Ts'o had successfully proposed that honors should be given in return for the provision of grain; his purpose was to encourage agriculture and the delivery of grain to remote areas. He had likewise advocated the gift of honors to those who volunteered to serve as settlers in the northern territories of the empire.

During Wu-ti's reign there were some instances in which the higher ranking orders, which could not be attained as a result of successive general bestowals, were given to specific individuals; these included statesmen such as Pu Shih (120 B.C.) and Sang Hung-yang (110 B.C.), who had advised the government on economic problems, and successful soldiers such as Wei

102 *HS* 6, p. 187 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 80f.); Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 126f.

Ch'ing (129 B.C.) and Hsü Tzu-wei (119 B.C.). Perhaps the most conspicuous use of the institution as a means of encouraging service is seen in the establishment of a separate series of military honors in 123 B.C. These could apparently be obtained in return for ready cash, which was sadly needed at the time to defray the heavy expenses of campaigns. It is also possible that purchase of these honors could provide a means of entry into the civil service.[103]

The economy

A famous passage in the Standard Histories recounts with some pride the state of material well-being which the empire enjoyed on the eve of Wu-ti's accession.[104] Apart from the hazards of nature, such as flood and drought, the empire had been singularly free of major disturbance for some seventy years. The population was well supplied with food, and the storehouses of town and country were well stocked. There was so much coin and grain in the imperial treasuries that the full tally could not be told; for the strings which had held the coins together had fallen apart and the grain had overflowed from the stotes to lie rotting, exposed to the elements. Further unmistakable signs of prosperity could be seen in the large number of horses throughour rhe land; and fine grain and meat was consumed in plenty in rhe villages. In this general state of abundance and stability, there was very little incentive to crime.

Possibly the historians have deliberately exaggerated the state of the realm at the end of Ching-ti's reign as a means of criticizing the extravagance practiced in the time of his successor; for the expansionist policies and campaigns of Wu-ti's statesmen involved considerable expenditure and the consumption of just those stocks that may have been accumulated during the preceding decades. To pay for these expansionist policies, Wu-ti's ministers put into practice a series of positive measures, again based on modernist ideas, which were designed to intensify the state's control of the economy.

From 119 B.C. new taxes were levied on market transactions, vehicles, and property to supplement the regular revenue collected from the produce tax in kind, and the poll tax in money; the new taxes were intended specifically to meet military expenses. At the same time, the rate of poll

103 For details of the orders of honor, see Loewe, "The orders of aristocratic rank of Han China." On Ch'ao Ts'o's proposals, see *HS* 24A, pp. 1130f. (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 158f.); and *HS* 49, p. 2286. The cost of purchasing the military honors seems to have been high, possibly very high, but the texts are varied and perhaps defective, and therefore uncertain.

104 *HS* 24A, p. 1135 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 173f.).

tax on minors aged three to fourteen, was raised from 20 to 23 coins, while the standard rate of 120 coins for adults remained unchanged.[105] Following a number of experiments during the earlier days of the dynasty, in 119 B.C. a new copper coin, weighing five *shu* (3.2 grams), was specified as legal tender. Six years later private minting was banned, perhaps quite effectively; the state took over complete control for producing supplies of the new cash, which was to remain China's regular coin until the T'ang dynasty.[106] Beginning from ca. 120 B.C., steps were taken to bring the production of the mines, which had hitherto been in private hands, under the direct and sole control of the state. Eventually, forty-eight commissioners were established in areas of production to supervise the manufacture and distribution of iron goods; thirty-four other commissioners administered the production and sale of salt, whether this was garnered from the sea or drawn from deep wells in the interior.[107]

These commissioners were responsible to the superintendent of agriculture (*ta nung-ling*, later named *ta ssu-nung*); they were also ordered to raise supplementary revenue by imposing a tax on the finished products. A little later (98 B.C.) the government set up a state monopoly to control the production of alcoholic liquors; it had also founded organs to stabilize the price of commodities (115 B.C.) and to coordinate transport (110 B.C.), in order to alleviate local or temporary shortages and to prevent profiteering. Engineers and conscript laborers were constantly employed to control waterways by means of dikes or by dredging. The banks of the Yellow River had been giving cause for alarm since 132 B.C., and major breaches were finally closed only in 109 B.C., when Wu-ti himself supervised the last stages of the work, giving it the seal of imperial approval.[108] Special commissioners were appointed to supervise agricultural settlements in the distant, newly penetrated lands of Central Asia.[109] At the behest of the government, up to ten large caravans, sometimes mustering a complement of several hundred men, would set out annually from Ch'ang-an to trade with the kingdoms of the western regions.[110]

Since the beginning of the dynasty, major financial responsibility had

105 See Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 278f., 366f.; and Katō Shigeshi, *Shina keizaishi kōshō* (Tokyo, 1952–53), Vol. I, pp. 60f.

106 See Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 377f.; and Lien-sheng Yang, *Money and credit in China: A short history* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), pp. 21f.

107 See Map 17 and Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 62f.; Katō, *Shina keizaishi kōshō*, Vol. I, pp. 41f.; Li Chien-nung, *Hsien-Ch'in liang Han ching-chi shih-kao* (Peking, 1957), pp. 249f.

108 *HS* 6, pp. 163, 193 (Dubs, *HFHD*, II, pp. 40, 90); *HS* 29, pp. 1679f.

109 See Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, pp. 56, 61, 144 note 26.

110 *HS* 61, p. 2694 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 220); A. F. P. Hulsewé, "Quelques considérations sur le commerce de la soie au temps de la dynastie des Han," in *Mélanges de Sinologie offerts à Monsieur P. Demiéville* (Paris, 1974), Vol. II, pp. 117–36.

rested with two organs of central government, the offices of the superintendent of agriculture (*ta ssu-nung*) and the superintendent of the lesser treasury (*shao-fu*). It is hardly surprising that the new types of economic control required a more complex administration; in 115 B.C. a third major office, that of the superintendent of waterways and parks (*shui-heng tu-wei*), was set up for this purpose. The new office shared responsibility for the collection and disbursement of revenue with the other two organs; from 113 B.C. it also became responsible for the manufacture of coin in the newly founded state mints.[111]

These policies derived from the initiative of modernist statesmen and drew some criticism from their reformist opponents. Both sides agreed on one principle, that the first priority must be given to stimulating agriculture as the primary productive occupation, and that trade and manufacturing were matters of secondary importance. But the two sides differed over the means of achieving these objectives.

Modernist statesmen favored the encouragement of agriculture by free enterprise; they accepted the growth of large landed estates as a necessary consequence; and as, the larger the estates, the greater the tax paid to the state, they were ready to exploit the results of such growth for the good of the treasury. However, they favored a system of state control for other types of production, such as those of the mines, being ready to direct conscript labor to such work and to take a profit from the products; in addition, they wished to deny such sources of wealth to individual magnates. They believed that trade should be controlled as an ancillary means of distributing China's products; they were therefore ready to set up officials to supervise the transactions of markets at home, and to equip state caravans to set out with cargos of silks abroad.

The reformists protested against the growth of large landed estates in view of the grave imbalance that would ensue between rich and poor; in time they were willing to introduce measures to control the size of landholdings. They believed that the mines were best worked by private owners without interference by the state. They saw little value to the people of China in the exchange of home-produced silks for the luxury produce of foreign parts, such as jade and other baubles which were fit only to embellish a sovereign's palace. The reformists also sought to prevent the accumulation of large mercantile fortunes, but for reasons that differed from those which moved the modernists; they wished to prevent the economic oppression which wealthy merchants could exercise over the peasantry.

111 *HS* 19A, p. 735; *HS* 24B, p. 1170 (Swann, *Food and money*, p. 297); Katō, *Shina keizaishi kōshō*, Vol. I, pp. 36f.

These differences may be illustrated in personal terms by considering the protagonists or statesmen who proposed, operated, or opposed these measures. Modernist policies were introduced largely thanks to the influence of Sang Hung-yang (ca. 141–80 B.C.). Of all the men of the day, he was perhaps the most capable of seeing China's economic problems and potential as a whole. He came from a merchant's counting house in Lo-yang, and as a boy had earned a high reputation for his skill at mental arithmetic. We also hear of two assistants in the office of the superintendent of agriculture who came to the fore at the time when the monopolies were established for salt and iron. Both men had made fortunes when these industries were open to free enterprise, Tung-kuo Hsien-yang as a salt magnate, K'ung Chin as an iron master. It was a shrewd step on the part of the government to entrust the new state monopolies to men such as these, who possessed first-hand experience of the undertakings. They both spent some time traveling through the empire to organize the new commissions. K'ung Chin was appointed superintendent of agriculture from 115 to 113 B.C.[112]

There were others who were not persuaded of the virtues of the new methods. None could question the patriotism of Pu Shih, who had at times contributed sums of money from his own pocket for the prosecution of the emperor's wars. He had indeed been honored for making such gifts (120 B.C.), and had served as one of the central government's nominees as chancellor of the kingdom of Ch'i. In 111 B.C. Pu Shih was appointed to the second most responsible post in the empire, that of imperial counsellor; but within a year he had been degraded. He had found cause to criticize the products of the state-controlled mines, and paid the price for voicing his misgivings.[113] Tung Chung-shu (ca. 179–ca. 104 B.C.) was another critic of these times who is better known for his contribution to Han philosophy. His protest against the economic policies of the modernist statesmen was based on moral grounds; he believed that they would widen the gap between rich and poor and cause the lot of the peasantry to deteriorate.[114]

Foreign affairs and colonial expansion

The statesmen who shaped Chinese policies during Wu-ti's reign paid no less attention to foreign affairs than to organizing the economy; here too there was a marked change from a negative attitude to positive initiative.[115]

112 *SC* 30, p. 1431 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. III, pp. 575f.); *HS* 19B, p. 780; *HS* 24B, p. 1173 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 309f.); *HS* 58, pp. 2624f.

113 *HS* 24B, pp. 1173–75 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 309f.).

114 *HS* 24A, pp. 1137f. (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 177f.).

115 For a more detailed treatment of colonial expansion, see Chapter 6 below.

By now the empire was strong enough to launch offensive campaigns into Asia; to rebuild, reequip, and extend the garrison lines of the north; to found commanderies in newly penetrated territories; to dispatch expeditions overseas, and to foster the growth of trade along the routes that would be known as the Silk Roads (see map 16, p. 406).

The reasons why Han China could take the initiative at this juncture are not far to seek. However much the modernist statesmen who served Wen-ti or Ching-ti might have wished to do so, they could not call on sufficient armed strength nor did they dispose of material resources sufficient to support an expansionist effort for long. But by now the empire was more effectively organized. There was a place at court for pioneers who were willing to undertake new ventures and risk great odds in service to the Han emperor. Relatives of the imperial consorts were themselves engaged in the campaigns, and they were resolved to maintain their family's favorable situation by dint of bravery and successful warfare. Above all, the whole policy of expansion and colonization complements the measures taken in these decades to enhance China's material prosperity.

It is unlikely that Wu-ti's advisers formed their policies on the basis of long-term planning; but it is nonetheless noticeable that a distinct, broad strategy emerged in the course of thirty years. From 135 to 119 B.C. the main effort was directed against the threats of the Hsiung-nu. There followed a period of seven years in which the strength of the empire was refreshed and regrouped; from 112 B.C., Chinese forces took the initiative once more by advancing in the south or southwest, in Korea, or along the routes into Central Asia.

Chinese forces took the offensive against the Hsiung-nu from 133 B.C., under the direction of well-known generals such as Li Kuang, Wei Ch'ing, Huo Ch'ü-ping, and Ch'eng Pu-shih. By 127 B.C. it had become possible to found commanderies at the northwestern tip of Chinese territory, under the names of Shuo-fang and Wu-yüan. But the principal successes in driving the Hsiung-nu from Chinese borders are attributed to Wei Ch'ing and Huo Ch'ü-ping – who, significantly enough, were both related to Wu-ti's empress. After their victories of 121 and 119 B.C., there is no record of Hsiung-nu penetration into China in strength until 103 B.C.

In the meantime Chang Ch'ien had completed his epic feats of exploration in Central Asia. He undertook a journey to the Far West on two occasions, starting first in 139 B.C. and a second time in 115 B.C.[116]

116 For the dates of Chang Ch'ien's journeys and his death in 113 B.C., see Ying-shih Yü, *Trade and expansion in Han China: A study in the structure of Sino-barbarian economic relations* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), pp. 135–36; Nishijima Sadao, *Chūgoku no rekishi*, Vol. II, *Shin Kan teikoku* (Tokyo, 1974), pp. 192f.; and Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 209–10, note 774, and 218, note 819.

During these ventures he spent some years in captivity with the Hsiung-nu; he observed living conditions to the north of India; he noted the presence of Chinese goods in Bactria; and he sent deputies as far as Sogdiana or even Arsacid Persia. It was thanks to an accident of history that Chang Ch'ien's visit to Bactria took place after the removal of the main Greek influence from those regions; we may well speculate in what ways Chinese culture might have been affected had he arrived there a few decades previously and seen for himself the living civilization of the world of Hellas. Speculation apart, Chang Ch'ien duly reported on the possibility of communicating with the states of the northwest; and he hinted at the potential value of trade with those regions. He also pointed out the advantages in forging an alliance with other peoples who shared a common cause with China in their enmity with the Hsiung-nu.

As a result of Chang Ch'ien's advice, the main thrust of Han expansion was directed first toward the northwest. The old defense lines of the Ch'in empire were extended to the west, eventually terminating at the Jade Gate, near Tun-huang. The purpose of the new wall, which was mostly a line of earthworks, was threefold. It defended Chinese territory from sudden raids; it prevented the desertion of those who wished to abscond from justice or evade their obligations of tax and service; and it formed a protected route along which merchandise could be escorted with some measure of safety. The evidence of the earthworks themselves and the written records that the garrison troops left behind in their rubbish pits testifies to the professional standards maintained by the Han armies, with their regular inspections, routine signals and patrols, and insistence on precise timing for all operations.

The wall led through uncharted territory, where the commandery of Wu-wei was later to be founded, to a detached outpost of the Han empire formed by the commanderies of Chiu-ch'üan and Chang-i (founded in 104 B.C.). Thereafter the protection of the wall came to an end; the caravans followed the Silk Roads on the northern or southern edges of the Taklamakan Desert, which were controlled by a series of small tribes or states settled on the oases. It was a matter of prime importance to the Chinese to win the friendship of these peoples and deny it to the Hsiung-nu; otherwise Han travelers and caravans would lie open to molestation or the denial of water and shelter in time of need.

The Chinese were therefore willing to acknowledge the independence of the leaders of these small states in return for their toleration of Chinese mercantile activities, and a complex system of relationships soon arose with some of the local kings and their families. Alien hostages who were delivered to Ch'ang-an from the states of the Silk Roads were able to partake



Map 8. The Han empire, 108 B.C.

of the pleasures of Chinese civilization; by contrast, the Chinese princesses who were given in matrimony to the local chieftains of Asia faced the hardships of a life among untutored barbarians. Exchanges of this sort did not always ensure the friendship of the two parties. There were occasions when careful Chinese diplomatic arrangements gave way to violence, and the Han government was obliged to dispatch military expeditions deep into Central Asia to maintain its presence there.[117]

Material evidence demonstrates that Chinese silk was actively carried along these routes.[118] In time this would reach its destination in the Mediterranean world, although there was no direct contact between the Chinese and the Roman empires. As the decades passed, the export of silk formed part of a system of trade in which five parties other than the Chinese came to be concerned, while remaining ignorant of the efforts and objectives of their partners. These parties came from Rome, Central Asia, India, Indonesia, and Africa or the Middle East. Non-Chinese drovers of Central Asia acted as carriers or guides for the Chinese products, and from Central Asia China received horses and raw jade, and possibly fleece. Eventually the silks would reach Rome, there to adorn the wives of senators and other patricians. Rome also received spices grown in Indonesia and pepper from India; and Rome paid for these goods with iron manufactures, glass, or bullion, of which remains are now being found in East and Southeast Asia. The transport, management, and storage of goods at the western ends of the trade routes came to rest with shrewd operators from Africa, also a home of certain spices, and the Middle East.

Chinese soldiers and officials, diplomats, and colonists were reaching out to far greater distances than those penetrated previously, and the incentives for doing so came from the Han government. But the new commanderies founded in far-flung regions such as Tun-huang often marked the Chinese readiness to expand rather than the firm and effective establishment of normal Chinese administrative practices. Indeed, toward the end of Wu-ti's reign there were unmistakable signs that China's strength had been strained too far. General Li Kuang-li, brother of one of the emperor's consorts, set out in 104 B.C. with a large force to bring the Chinese will to bear on the king of Ferghana (Ta-yüan); he was forced to return in ignominy to Tun-huang, and it was only after a second attempt and very heavy casualties that he succeeded in his mission. Toward the end of the reign, Sang Hung-yang sought to consolidate the Chinese position in the west by establishing colonies at Bugur (Lun-t'ai), east of Kucha, but his proposal was rejected as

117 For a summary of these relations, see Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 39–66.

118 See Yü, *Trade and expansion*, pp. 104, 153; and for the spread of other types of Chinese goods, Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 58, note 160.

being too expensive and too risky. In 99 B.C. Li Ling suffered a defeat deep in alien territory, after heroic feats of arms; in 90 B.C. Li Kuang-li was beaten by the Hsiung-nu and, like Li Ling, forced to surrender to his old enemy.[119]

In the meantime Chinese eyes had not been closed to the possibility of expansion in other areas. Just as Chang Ch'ien had pioneered the way to the northwest, so had Chuang Chu played a leading part in the advance toward the south. Here the Han forces faced a mountainous and forested or swampy terrain and a malarial climate to which they were not accustomed. But in the south there was no strong adversary such as the Hsiung-nu. Following shorter and more localized campaigns than those of the northwest, Han officials expanded their spheres of influence and set up new commanderies, winning over the loyalties of local leaders or according them some measure of independence.

Wu-ti's reign thus saw considerable advances to the southwest and the southeast, and the consolidation of Han authority in the south and in Korea.[120] From 135 B.C. it had been realized that an active trade was being conducted from the southwest to Nan-yüeh (Vietnam) by way of the Tsang-ko River, and some ten years later Chang Ch'ien reported that he had observed Chinese goods from Shu (Szechwan) in Bactria (Ta-hsia). It was also hoped that, by winning the goodwill of a few of the principal tribal leaders in the southwest, it would be possible for the Han government to establish its presence there in reasonable safety, and to profit from the material resources, which included some precious metals. For some years the advance to the south was held up while attention was concentrated in the north to settle the problem of the Hsiung-nu. But by 111 B.C. Han influence had been extended by the establishment of the new commanderies of Tsang-ko and Yüeh-sui (Yünnan and Szechwan). The establishment of I-chou commandery followed in 108 B.C., and the affection of local leaders was wooed by the confirmation of their titles of king. At the same time, the threat of disaffection and the outbreak of revolt in Nan-yüeh prompted the dispatch of a military expedition, which succeeded in restoring Han prestige in the south. As a result, nine new commanderies were set up, including two on Hainan Island.

119 For Li Ling, see *HS* 54, pp. 2450f.; and Loewe, "Campaigns of Han Wu-ti," pp. 90f., 119f. For Li Kuang-li, see *HS* 61, pp. 2699f.; and Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 228f.

120 For the advance to the south, see *HS* 64A, pp. 2775f.; and *HS* 95, pp. 3837f. For archeological evidence (including a Chinese style seal inscribed for the king of Tien) that supports the literary sources, see William Watson, *Cultural frontiers in ancient East Asia* (Edinburgh, 1971), pp. 149f.; and Emma C. Bunker, "The Tien culture and some aspects of its relationship to the Dong-son culture," in *Early Chinese art and its possible influence in the Pacific basin*, ed. Noel Barnard (Taiwan, 1974), pp. 291–328. For Chinese advances in Korea, see K. H. J. Gardiner, *The early history of Korea* (Canberra, 1969).

To the east (Fukien), the central government had had varying relations with the independent kingdoms of Min-yüeh and Tung-ou, which had been established in 202 and 192 B.C., respectively. Although Wu-ti's generals, sometimes with naval forces, succeeded in preventing any hostile pressure from here against Han territory, the land was thought to be unsuitable for settlement and the inhabitants too refractory to admit units of provincial government. It may in any case be questioned how far the foundation of a commandery necessarily implied control of an outlying area.

In Korea, an abortive attempt to establish the commandery of Ts'ang-hai (128–127 B.C.) was followed twenty years later by a more successful venture. In 108 B.C. the local leaders of Ch'ao-hsien surrendered to Han forces, and four commanderies were set up in the peninsula (see map 8, p. 167).

Subsequent critics, who lived at a time when Chinese policies had turned from expansion to retrenchment, were quick to point out the heavy expenses of these ventures in human, material, and monetary terms. In return, by 104 B.C. some twenty new commanderies were listed as administrative units of the empire.[121] North China had been almost completely free of raids for fifteen years; Chinese authority had been displayed in the northwest; and for some decades to come the Hsiung-nu would be slow to confront China openly. In addition to the exchange of silks for horses and jades, China had learned to grow and use new crops and fruits, such as lucerne (clover), pomegranate, and the vine. In the city of Ch'ang-an, the emperor had staged banquets, displays, and other forms of entertainment to impress visitors with the might and wealth of the Han empire. Some of these foreigners, such as the Hsiung-nu Chin Mi-ti, were persuaded to serve the Han empire themselves, and even rose to the highest posts in the civil service; the loyalties of many others were secured by creating them marquises of the empire.[122]

Intellectual and religious support

Developments of the mind, whose effects long outlasted the Han dynasty, feature no less conspicuously in the age of Wu-ti than plans to organize the provinces, to expand the economy, or to widen Chinese interests in newly penetrated lands. Writing during Wu-ti's reign, Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju (ca.

121 The exact number is unknown owing to the lack of complete information. The new commanderies included two in the northwest, two to four in the northeast, two in the north, three in the southwest, two in the west, and nine in the south.

122 For Chin Mi-ti, see *HS* 68, pp. 2959f.

180–117 B.C.) set the fashion for a new genre of poetry known as *fu*, which was to affect literary developments in the succeeding centuries.[123] His contemporary, Tung Chung-shu (ca. 179–104 B.C.), explained the world of mankind in cosmic terms, as part of a major, universal system of creation; his synthesis long formed part of the framework accepted as orthodox for Confucian thought.[124] Ssu-ma T'an, who died ca. 110 B.C., together with his son Ssu-ma Ch'ien (died ca. 86 B.C.), created a new form of history which was to remain as the standard for two thousand years.[125] While poetry, philosophy, and the art of history each received a new impetus as a result of these and similar contributions, the emperor himself was not noticeably concerned in these activities, although the records do include some short poems attributed to his brush. We hear more of Wu-ti's personality and practices in the context of the religious cults of state and privately held beliefs.

By taking part in the established cults, and by inaugurating some new rites, Wu-ti was serving the interests of the state and the growth of empire in a manner that was peculiarly reserved for him as emperor and denied to other mortals. As the supreme arbiter of human destinies on earth, he was taking steps to forge a link with the sacred powers in the hope of securing their protection and blessing. It will be shown below how the concept of those powers came to change when a reformist attitude had displaced modernist opinion.[126]

From his forbears, the emperor inherited the duty of worshipping at the shrines of the Five Powers (*wu-ti*) which were established at Yung. But he fulfilled his obligations more conscientiously than they had done, visiting the site in 134 for the first time, and seven times subsequently. To complement the service of those powers, which were thought to dominate successive periods of time or adjoining areas of space, Wu-ti inaugurated state cults to the Earth Queen (Hou-t'u) in 114 B.C., and to the Grand Unity (T'ai-i) in 113 B.C. On five subsequent occasions he observed the rites to the Earth Queen at Fen-yin, and thrice he paid his respects to the Grand Unity at Kan-ch'üan. At the time when these forms of worship were being started, the Office of Music (*yüeh-fu*) was set up with responsibility for the musical accompaniment to the services; the texts of nineteen hymns that

123 See *SC* 117; *HS* 57A, 57B; and Yves Hervouet, *Un poète de cour sous les Han: Sseu-ma Siang-jou* (Paris, 1964); and Yves Hervouet, *Le Chapitre 117 du Che-ki* (*Biographie de Sseu-ma Siang-jou*); *traduction avec notes* (Paris, 1972).

124 See *HS* 56. A work entitled *Ch'un-ch'iu fan-lu* is ascribed to Tung Chung-shu, but doubts have been cast on the authenticity of all or parts of the book.

125 For the importance of these two authors, see A. F. P. Hulsewé, "Notes on the historiography of the Han period," in *Historians of China and Japan*, ed. W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank (London, 1961), pp. 31–43; and Burton Watson, *Ssu-ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China* (New York, 1958).

126 See pp. 207f. below.

were chanted on these occasions have been preserved in the Standard Histories.[127]

In addition to participating in these acts of worship on behalf of the dynasty, Wu-ti was personally attracted to seek the road to immortality. As in the days of the First Emperor of Ch'in, so now this was thought to lie by way of a paradise of the east, through the blessed Isle of P'eng-lai. There are also reports that the emperor was susceptible to the claims of those *fang-shih* or intermediaries who promised him the elixir of life or the restoration of one of his deceased consorts to earth. These accounts are to be found in the solemn pages of the Standard Histories; beginning with literature of the third century A.D., they pass into the realm of fantasy and legend, together with the myth of Wu-ti as a sovereign possessing semi-magical powers and enjoying contacts with the Queen Mother of the West.[128]

Possibly the most splendid and important religious function of the reign was the performance of the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices on Mount T'ai in 110 B.C. The emperor made his progress to that holy mountain with considerable dignity and at great expense, and the principal motive for the expedition seems again to have been the search for immortality. On this occasion the ceremonies laid considerable emphasis on *huang-ti*, the "power of yellow," or the Yellow Emperor, who was conceived as an agent who could procure the desired blessing. Possibly this new feature had gained acceptance at this time because the intermediaries of the usual type had been tried and found wanting, their promises unfulfilled.[129]

In intellectual terms, the year 105–104 B.C. forms a climax of imperial pride and self-confidence. Some sixty years previously Chia I had unsuccessfully suggested that the dynasty should adopt earth as its patron symbol in place of the element water, which had been inherited from Ch'in. By now the time was judged ripe to make the change, which displayed the dynasty's conscious faith in its own strength and authority. The destiny of Han was firmly linked with the cosmic rhythm whereby one phase, or element, regularly gives place to its successor; by changing its devotions from water to earth, Han was demonstrating that it claimed the right to rule by virtue of conquest over its predecessor. The inauguration of a new era was marked by other symbolic changes, such as the adoption of a new calendar and the use of new titles for some senior offices of state. Above all, from 104 B.C.

127 The emperor's visits to Yung took place in 123, 122, 114, 113, 110, 108 and 92 B.C.; to Fen-yin in 107, 105, 104, 103, and 100 B.C.; and to Kan-ch'üan in 106, 100 and 88 B.C. See Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 166f., 193f.

128 See Michael Loewe, *Ways to paradise: The Chinese quest for immortality* (London, 1979), Chapters 2, 4, for the concept of the eastern paradise and its depiction, and for the myth of the Queen Mother of the West and the western paradise.

129 See Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 184f.

on, years were enumerated according to a new reign title; the expression chosen was *t'ai-ch'u*, The Grand Beginning.[130]

Dynastic discord

Events were soon to belie the optimism of those who saw a new era beginning in 104 B.C. Within five years the government had been obliged to appoint special commissioners to restore order by force. An edict that may probably be dated in 90 B.C. alludes to the people's exhaustion, to the prevalence of bandits, and to the extreme measures taken to exterminate them. Above all, Han passed through a dynastic crisis in 91–90 B.C. which all but brought the imperial house to an end. For the first time since 122, there was no duly nominated successor to the throne; an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate the emperor took place in 88 B.C.[131]

These troubles stemmed partly from the growing influence of the imperial consorts and their families. During the reigns of Wen-ti and Ching-ti, no one woman had dominated the political scene. The empress Tou, consort of Wen-ti and mother of Ching-ti, may perhaps have persuaded those around her of the virtues of a Taoist attitude to life, but she had not sought unduly to promote the cause of her family or to exert an influence on policy. Only one of her relations, Tou Ying, had risen to a senior position in the government.[132] It is possible that the death of the empress dowager Tou in 135 B.C., and the removal of her restraining influence, permitted Wu-ti's statesmen to introduce their new active policies and measures without inhibition; but equally possibly, such developments were unconnected with any influence which she had exercised at court.

A more complex domestic situation colored the reign of Wu-ti. A number of relatives of the empress or of the lesser imperial consorts attained high positions of state; statesmen were able to marry their daughters to members of the imperial family; and in time they found themselves fathers-in-law of an emperor. Political rivalries had become linked with the question of the imperial succession, and the eclipse of a statesman, his associates, or his policies could depend on the fortunes of an empress or an heir apparent.

The violence to which these issues could give rise may be seen in the case of Wu-ti's first empress, who was named Ch'en. She had been elevated to

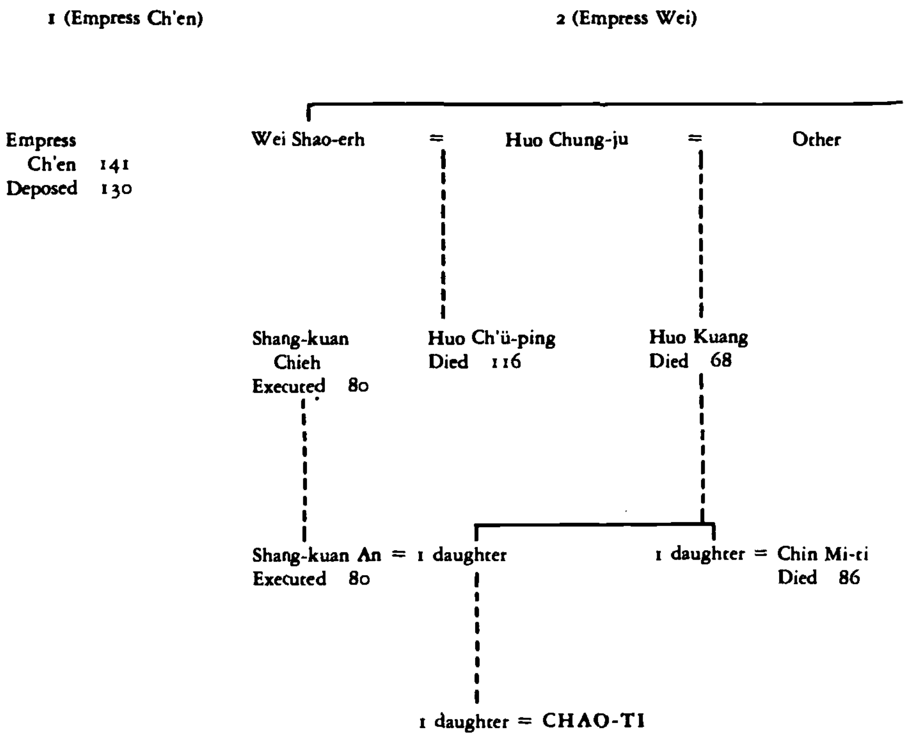
130 See Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 17f.

131 *HS* 96B, pp. 3912, 3929 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 165, 201); Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, p. 64. The principal sources for this section will be found in *HS* chapters 6, 63, 66, 68, and 97A (Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, Chapter 2).

132 Tou Ying was general-in-chief (*ta chiang-chün*) in the revolt of 154 B.C., and rose to be chancellor in 140–139 B.C. (*HS* 19B, p. 766). Another nephew, Tou P'eng-tsu, was superintendent of ceremonial (*t'ai-ch'ang*) in 153 B.C. For Tou Ying, see *HS* 52, pp. 2375–77.

TABLE 6

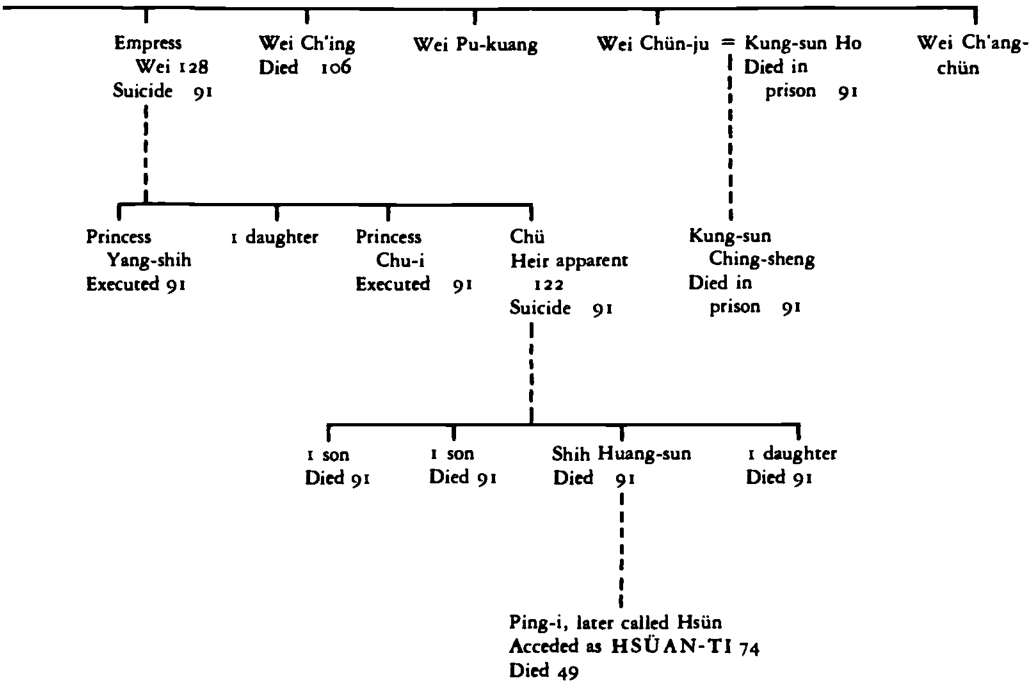
Wu-ti and his consorts



that honor in 141 B.C., but failed to produce a male heir to the throne. To save her from her plight and the jealousies of her rivals, her daughter resorted to witchcraft; on the discovery of these practices, the empress was stripped of her title and no less than three hundred persons who were involved in the case were executed (130 B.C.).

The empress Ch'en's successors included the empress Wei, who was nominated in 128 B.C., and lesser consorts named Li, Chao, Wang, and again Li. A number of relatives of these ladies played a significant part in the development of Han policies and the dynastic drama of Wu-ti's reign.[133] Wei Ch'ing and Huo Ch'ü-ping, two of China's leading generals,

133 The consorts were Lady Li, Chao Chieh-yü, Wang Fu-jen, and Li Chi.



were, respectively, the brother and nephew of the empress Wei, who was forced to commit suicide in 91 B.C. Huo Ch'ü-ping's half-brother Huo Kuang and Huo Kuang's son Huo Yü played a leading role in politics until the eclipse of the Huo family in 66 B.C. Liu Chü, son of the empress Wei, had been declared heir apparent in 122 B.C., and committed suicide in 91 B.C. His grandson, who is better known under his dynastic title of Hsüan-ti, acceded to the throne in 74 B.C. and was married to a daughter of Huo Kuang.

Li Kuang-li, the general who led the campaign in Central Asia in 104–101 B.C. and later surrendered to the Hsiung-nu, was a brother of the Lady Li, who died some time before 87 B.C.; another of her brothers, Li Yen-nien, had been appointed master of harmonies (*hsieh-lü tu-wei*) and had been

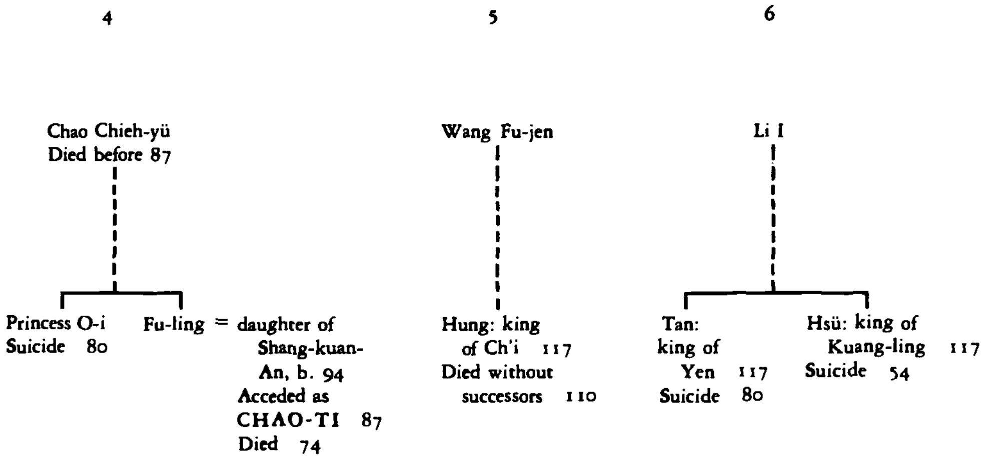
TABLE 6 (*cont.*)

3 (Lady Li)

- Li Chi
  Executed 90
- Li Yen-nien
  Executed 90
- Lady Li (Li Fu-jen)
  Died before 87
  - Po: king of Ch'ang-i 100
    Died 88 or 86
    - Ho: 74
      Succeeded Chao-ti as emperor for 27 days
      Deposed, ennobled as marquis of Hai-hun 63
      Died 59
- Li Kuang-li
  Surrendered to Hsiung-nu 90
  - 1 daughter = Liu Ch'u-li
    Executed 90

concerned with the musical entertainment of the palace. Her grandson Liu Ho reigned as emperor for twenty-seven days, after the death of Chao-ti in 74 B.C. Chao-ti was himself the son of another of Wu-ti's consorts named Chao; exceptionally, her family does not seem to have been involved in politics, and the choice of her son to succeed Wu-ti in 87 B.C. may have been due in part to the absence of any of her relatives in high places. Three sons born of Wu-ti's other consorts held kingdoms within the empire; one of these, Liu Tan, king of Yen, twice attempted to seize the throne, and paid for his second failure with his life (80 B.C.).

The complex story of Wu-ti's consorts and their families' rivalries merits little more than summary. During the first fifty years of the reign, the Wei family retained its position of dominance, at a time when modernist poli-



cies were being adopted and intensified. A dynastic crisis occurred in 91 B.C., just when those policies were proving to be ruinously expensive and the need for retrenchment was being realized. For a few months the family of the Lady Li tried to oust the Wei family from favor. Five days of fighting broke out in the city of Ch'ang-an between the heir apparent of the Wei family, supported by a force of criminals and convicts, and opposing troops who remained loyal to the emperor, but were bitterly opposed to the Wei family and friendly to the Li. The emperor, for his part, lay safely in his summer retreat at Kan-ch'üan. The whole incident had been sparked by allegations, and some evidence, that witchcraft was being practiced in high places and on a large scale throughout the city.

If the histories may be believed, the price paid for this outburst of

jealousy was staggering. Those who were killed in the fighting could be numbered by the ten thousand. In addition to the suicide of the empress and the heir apparent, two of the empress's daughters were executed; six other relatives who are known to have died included the chancellor, Kung-sun Ho, and his son Kung-sun Ching-sheng, who was one of the nine ministers of state. Kung-sun Ho, brother-in-law of the empress, died in prison together with his son. Other victims of the charge of witchcraft included the famous generals Kung-sun Ao (no relation of Kung-sun Hung) and Chao P'o-nu. Between February and September 91 B.C., the Wei family was all but exterminated in this way; then the tide turned in its favor and against the Li family, which stood to gain so much by the downfall of its immediate rivals. The suicide of two imperial counsellors (Pao Sheng-chih and Shang-ch'iu Ch'eng) and the execution of another chancellor (Liu Ch'u-li) was part of the price paid for the restoration of relative stability; the Li family was itself brought to ruin with the news of Li Kuang-li's surrender to the Hsiung-nu and the execution of his two brothers and his son.

Most members of the Wei and the Li families had been eliminated, but there remained one man of considerable character and strength who was soon to be taking the leading part in dynastic affairs. This was Huo Kuang, who was related to the late empress Wei by marriage.[134] His voice had long been heard in the council chambers of Ch'ang-an, where he had taken great care to avoid implication in the intrigues of the palace or to lay himself open to suspicion.

The aged Wu-ti fell ill in the spring of 87 B.C., and it soon became clear that he would not survive for long. At the time, no heir apparent had been nominated to succeed him, and Huo Kuang is reported to have asked the emperor what he wished for the future. How far the outcome was the result of the emperor's expressed wish and how far it followed from Huo Kuang's own intentions may never be known. In the event, it was planned to put a minor on the throne, under the protection of senior officials. Responsibility for government was vested in a triumvirate, of whom Huo Kuang was the leading member, with the title of marshal of state; the other two members were Chin Mi-ti (see p. 170 above) and Shang-kuan Chieh. The three men were supported by Sang Hung-yang, who now held the post of imperial counsellor. At the same time the correct forms of Han institutions were upheld by the appointment of T'ien Ch'ien-ch'iu as chancellor; by all accounts he was the type of man who would agree to the decisions of the triumvirate.

134 Huo Kuang's father, Huo Chung-ju, had been married in the first instance to a sister of the empress Wei. Huo Kuang was born of his marriage with another woman.

These appointments were probably announced in an edict dated 17 March, 87 B.C. On 27 March Liu Fu-ling, son of the emperor's consort Chao, was nominated heir apparent. The boy was in his eighth year and motherless at the time; he came from neither the Wei nor the Li families, and his nomination would not enable the survivors of those families to stage a reentry into politics. It has even been suggested that, in order to make quite certain that the court would not again be subject to female influence, his mother had been quietly put to death, but no proof can be found for this allegation. The young boy had held the title of heir apparent for no more than two days when his father died and he duly acceded to the supreme position of emperor to be known under the title of Chao-ti.

THE YEARS OF TRANSITION (87–49 B.C.)

The role of the emperor and the succession

Chao-ti's accession in 87 B.C. was by no means the first occasion in Han history when a minor who was subject to the dominating influence of his seniors was enthroned as emperor; nor was it the last. Previously, two infants had been appointed emperors under the empress Lü; later cases included P'ing-ti (Liu Chi-tzu), who was in his ninth year at the time of his accession in 1 B.C., and Liu Ying, who was born in A.D. 5 and chosen to follow P'ing-ti in the following year; there are a number of similar instances during the Later Han period.

None of these emperors was expected to play an active part in affairs of state. Indeed, only in a few rare instances can it be shown that a Han emperor was personally responsible for initiating policies or guiding the destinies of the dynasty (Kao-ti, Wang Mang, Kuang-wu-ti, and to a lesser extent Hsüan-ti and Ai-ti). One conspicuous case, that of Chao-ti's immediate successor (pp. 183f. below), showed how irrelevant the person of an emperor could be to the rule of China, and how the succession could be manipulated to suit the ambitions and expedients of statesmen.

These instances raise the question of the extent of the authority that an emperor could wield and his importance to the conduct of government.[135] While the nature of imperial sovereignty will be discussed below, it may be observed here that, once a dynasty had been founded, the role of the emperor in political terms was strictly limited. Nevertheless, the very enthronement of infants demonstrates that the presence of an incumbent on

135 See Chapter 13, pp. 743f. below; Mansvelt Beck, "The true emperor of China;" and Loewe, "The authority of the emperors of Ch'in and Han."

the throne was essential for the maintenance of government. The emperor formed the apex at the head of the state, whence all authority could be said to devolve: without an emperor who had been duly enthroned, the framework of the dynasty was incomplete; without his formal authority, acts of government and the decisions of statesmen could be regarded as invalid.

With the passage of time it became advisable, or even necessary, to emphasize that emperors possessed this power, and to enhance their authority by linking it with the powers that were thought to preside over the cosmos; no small part of Tung Chung-shu's contribution to Chinese philosophy lay in his provision of an acknowledged place for a temporal ruler within the scheme of the universe. However, a man or boy who found himself at the summit of the state did not necessarily exercise this authority in person. It was due to the skill of Han statesmen that their own decisions were validated by a nominally superior person whom they themselves could control; and those decisions could be directed equally well either to furthering the interests of the empire or to promoting their own private causes. An emperor's seal was necessary for the promulgation of edicts, but ideally he must be persuaded to play a passive rather than an active role; he should rule by force of title rather than by exercise of personality; his existence was essential in formal terms, but his personal influence could be negligible in practice.

It is not surprising that some of the statesmen of Han were tempted to manipulate the succession in their own interests. They would do so, for example, by enthroning an infant who was subject to their own powers of persuasion. If they failed to do so, they might be in danger of being displaced by rivals. Although there are a number of cases when the succession was manipulated to enthrone a puppet, there is none in which this was done deliberately to enthrone a strong, active emperor possessed with his own will to govern.

There were a few occasions when a self-seeker attempted to seize the throne to gratify his own ambitions. Possibly the king of Ch'i, who is best known for his part in expelling the Lü family, had been bent on doing so in 180 B.C. In Chao-ti's reign there were two abortive attempts at a coup by Liu Tan, son of Wu-ti by a consort named Li, and king of Yen since 117 B.C. He had evidently entertained hopes of succeeding his father, and even went so far as to allege that the emperor was no true son of Wu-ti.[136] In 86 B.C. he plotted to seize the throne by force, and managed to avoid punishment only by fastening responsibility on one of his relatives. Six years later

136 For the king of Yen's part in these events, see *HS* 63, pp. 2750f.; *HS* 68, pp. 2935f.; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 73f. For the allegation doubting Wu-ti's paternity, see *HS* 63, p. 2753.

he made a second attempt, which was foiled by the premature disclosure of his plans; the king had hoped that Huo Kuang would be murdered as part of the coup d'état, but the failure of the plot ended with the king's suicide. In historical terms the incident concerned far weightier issues than the fate of the king of Yen, because two important statesmen were implicated in the plot and executed. The first was Shang-kuan Chieh, one of the members of the triumvirate set up at the death of Wu-ti; the second was no less a person than Sang Hung-yang, imperial counsellor and architect of the plans to systematize China's economy. A thitd victim also deserves mention, as his case shows that relationship to the throne could not always ensure immunity; this was Shang-kuan An, son of Shang-kuan Chieh, general of cavalry since 83 B.C., and father-in-law of the reigning emperor.

By now a change had begun to affect the manner in which the government of the empire was controlled. For although the complement of officials, including the senior statesmen, the chancellor, the imperial counsellor, and the nine ministers of state, continued to be filled, actual power had fallen into the hands of others who did not necessarily hold these posts. Since the early days of the dynasty it had been the custom to bestow certain honorary titles, such as palace attendant (*shih-chung*), on individuals. They were no more than marks of honor or favoritism, and there was no formal limit to the number of those who could receive them. Those who bore the titles had no specific duties, responsibilities, or stipend; they could enter the palace as they pleased and attend personally on the emperor.

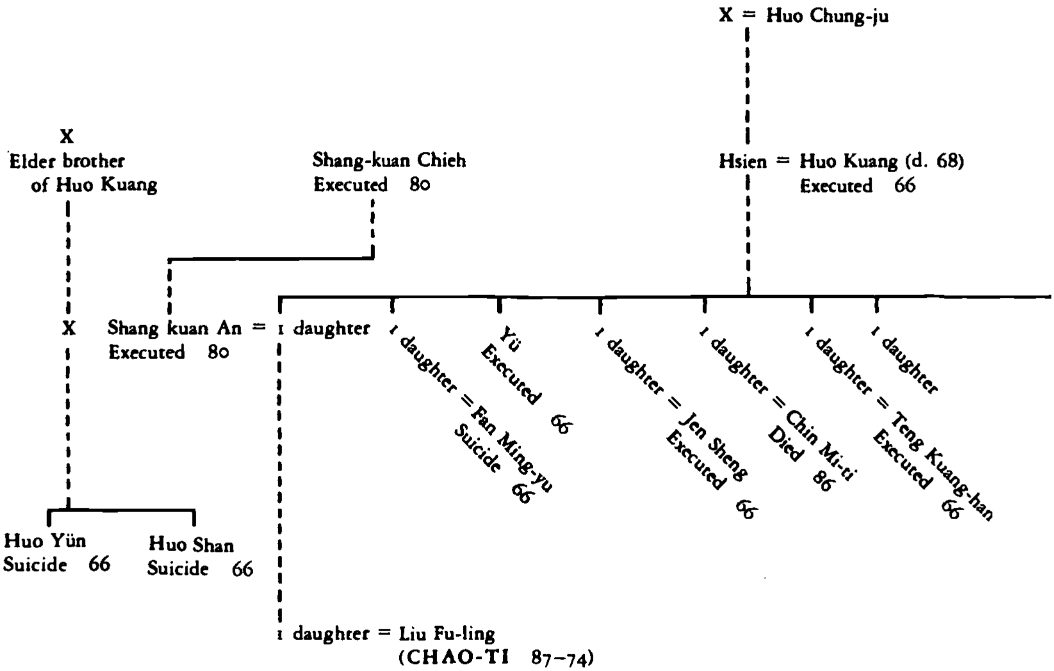
In time there grew up a coterie of those who bore such titles and whose strength was countering that of the officials proper. The group has sometimes been described as the Inner Court, by way of distinction from the Outer Court, which comprised the duly appointed and salaried officials of the civil service.[136a] At times one of the palace attendants was ordered to take the lead over the secretariat (*shang-shu*), which was one of the subordinate offices of the lesser treasury (*shao-fu*); in such circumstances the way lay open for the exercise of power, irrespective of the duties and activities of the regular officials. In this way the director of the secretariat (*shang-shu ling*) could become one of the most effective persons in the palace, enjoying direct access to the throne and being thus able to acquire the necessary authorization for his actions. The highest ranking of these honorary titles was that of marshal of state and this was given only on rare occasions; its bestowal conveyed an authority that none could question.

By the end of 80 B.C. Huo Kuang was in an eminently favorable

136a For the use of the terms Inner Court and Outer Court, see Bielenstein, *The bureaucracy of Han times*, pp. 154f.

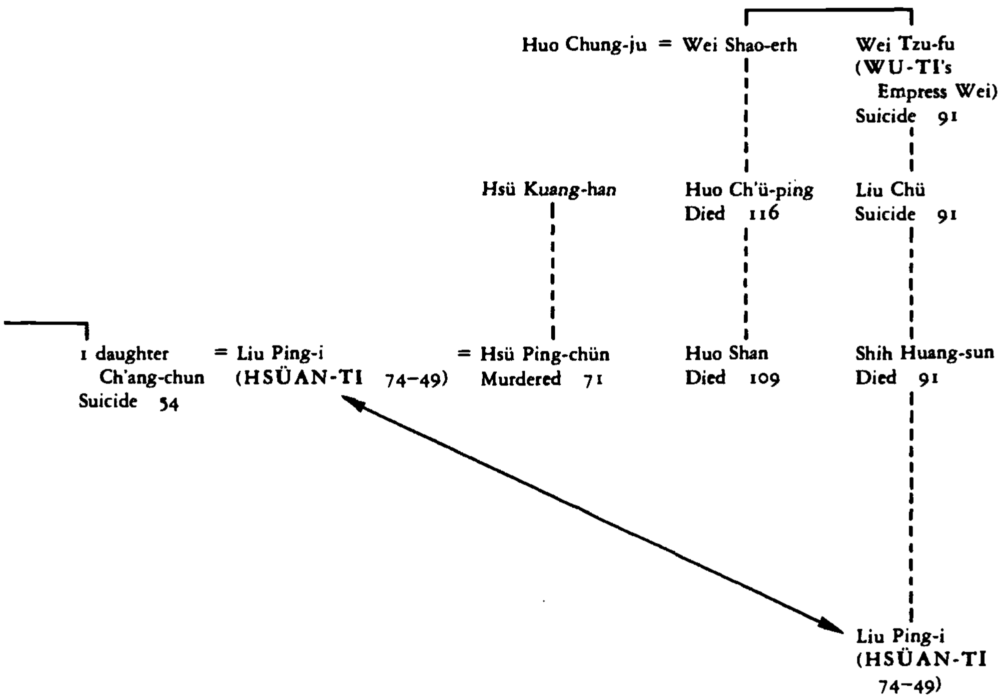
TABLE 7

Huo Kuang and his family



position.[137] The triumvirate had been brought to an end by the death of Chin Mi-ti in 86 B.C. and the execution of Shang-kuan Chieh in 80 B.C.; in Sang Hung-yang, the state had sacrificed one of its most able servants as a victim to the politics of power. No single rival could challenge the authority of Huo Kuang who, as marshal of state, could dominate the government of the empire. Certainly a chancellor, T'ien Ch'ien-ch'iu, had been duly appointed, but he was a man of no great distinction, old enough to merit the privilege of attending the court riding in a carriage rather than on foot. Huo Kuang, moreover, had been commissioned to lead the secretariat and thus enjoyed full civil powers. He was the sole surviving grandfather of the nine-year-old empress, who was now fatherless; Huo Kuang need hardly fear the alienation of her affections or loyalties, and the emperor would not attain his majority until 77 B.C.

137 For Huo Kuang, see *HS* 68, pp. 2931f.; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 113f.; and Ardid Jongchell, *Huo Kuang och hans tid* (Göteborg, 1930).



Clearly Huo Kuang was in a position to dominate the court and palace, and clearly he made full use of his advantages to do so after the death of Chao-ti in 74 B.C. The emperor died suspiciously young, being only twenty-two years old at the time; apparently he had not yet fathered an heir. Whether or not he had shown cause for Huo Kuang or others to wish for his removal is not known, and there is no hint in the records that his death was anything but natural.

Whatever the truth of Chao-ti's early demise may be, a dramatic interlude ensued in which the dying embers of rivalry between the Wei and the Li families suddenly burst into flame. A message was sent to Liu Ho inviting him to mount the imperial throne.[138] Liu Ho, king of Ch'ang-i, was a grandson of Lady Li, aged twenty. He is said to have responded to the call with immodest enthusiasm and speed, driving as hard as he could

138 *HS* 8, p. 238 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 203); *HS* 63, pp. 2764f.; *HS* 68, pp. 2937f.; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 75f.

to reach Ch'ang-an; and he was duly enthroned on a day corresponding to 18 July 74 B.C. No more than twenty-seven days later, on 14 August, he was deposed, being impeached for lacking the requisite qualities of respect and decorum, and for exploiting his position and privileges to indulge in extravagance.

His place was taken by Liu Ping-i, grandson of that heir apparent who had committed suicide in 91 B.C.; he was thus a descendant of Wu-ti's empress Wei. At the time of the scandal of 91 B.C. Liu Ping-i can only have been a babe in arms, but thanks to his relationship to the Wei family, he had stood in acute danger of his life. He owed his survival to Ping Chi, who was in charge of one of the prisons of Ch'ang-an and succeeded in smuggling him out of harm's way. Liu Ping-i had been brought up outside the immediate environment of the palace and was not open to obnoxious influences that could have derived therefrom; by 74 B.C. he was still only eighteen years of age. Called in his turn to proceed to Ch'ang-an, he became emperor on 10 September and lived to reign for twenty-five years. His elevation had been due to the suggestions of a number of officials, including his former patron Ping Chi.[139]

These events were attended by some violence; two hundred individuals were executed, allegedly for assisting the deposed Liu Ho in his indulgences. In addition, the formalities of the occasion deserve notice. The changes in the succession were brought about according to the prescribed procedures for promulgating commands; proposals were submitted by ministers of state, and these were approved by means of imperial edict. On this occasion the proposals were made in the usual manner, except that they were submitted in the names of all senior officials instead of the one or two which usually sufficed; but it could hardly be expected that the proposals and their charges would receive approval from an emperor whose deposition was their objective. The proposals were therefore presented to the empress dowager, the fifteen-year-old widow of Chao-ti who had just received that august title and who, it will be recalled, was the granddaughter of Huo Kuang. The promulgation of an edict in her name to approve the proposals followed the somewhat questionable constitutional practice of the empress Lü. At the same time, lip service was paid to the principle of continuity; due care was taken to inform the shrine of the founding emperor of the changes that were taking place in the imperial succession.[140]

139 For Ping Chi, see *HS* 74, pp. 3142f. At this time Ping Chi was serving on the staff of Huo Kuang; after the accession of the emperor Hsüan-ti, he was rewarded for his part by the order of *kuan-nei hou* (the nineteenth of the twenty orders of honor, ranking only below that of *hou*, marquis; *HS* 74, p. 3143). From being tutor to the heir apparent, he rose to be imperial counsellor in 67 B.C. (*HS* 19B, p. 803).

140 *HS* 8, p. 238 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 204); *HS* 68, pp. 2939f.

The fall of the Huo family

The years of Chao-ti's (87–74) and Hsüan-ti's (74–49) reigns may be regarded as an age of transition. Modernist policies, which had been taken to great lengths under Wu-ti, had proved to be too expensive and had overtaxed China's strength. Reformist hopes of purging contemporary government of its excesses and of harking back to the ideals of Chou in place of the practices of Ch'in were beginning to gain a following. A number of signs show that these ideas were influencing imperial policies during Hsüan-ti's reign, and in the succeeding decades they became generally accepted. Two significant events mark the stages of the change. First, in 81 B.C. a formal debate was staged at Ch'ang-an to discuss matters of both principle and practice; we are fortunate enough to possess a near contemporary account of the arguments that were raised, which will be considered below.

Secondly, the fall of the house of Huo[141] in 66 B.C. forms a critical turning point in the transformation from a modernist to a reformist point of view. To maintain its privileged and powerful position, the Huo family needed to retain its special relationship with the imperial house and to preclude the antagonism of rivals. Despite desperate efforts and a resort to violent means, the family failed to attain these objectives; by the seventh month of 66 B.C. an edict had been issued denouncing its treachery.

At the accession of Hsüan-ti in 74 B.C., control of the government remained in the firm grasp of Huo Kuang; his close relatives and associates commanded the guards' units; his son Huo Yü and his great-nephew Huo Shan were leaders of the court. The emperor refrained from interfering in affairs of state; the high honors and lavish gifts which Huo Kuang received demonstrated the extent of his privileges and status.

There was, however, one consideration that may have caused the Huo family some anxiety. Before his accession, Hsüan-ti had been married to Hsü P'ing-chün, whose father had once attended on Wu-ti and had served in Ch'ang-i, the kingdom of the luckless Liu Ho. Shortly before the death of Chao-ti, Hsü P'ing-chün had borne her husband a son, who was eventually destined to reign as Yüan-ti from 49 to 33 B.C. Just after Hsüan-ti's accession, the question arose of nominating an empress, and it was proposed that one of Huo Kuang's daughters should be singled out for the honor. The emperor, however, steadfastly refused to countenance the suggestion; he insisted that Hsü P'ing-chün should become his empress; and she was duly nominated in 74 B.C., despite Huo Kuang's personal protests. But there was little room for mercy in the customs of the day, and at least

141 The principal sources for this event are *HS* 59 and 68. See Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, Chapter 4.

one member of the Huo family was prepared to stop at nothing in order to safeguard family interests. Quite soon the empress became pregnant; Huo Hsien, wife of Huo Kuang, arranged for her to be poisoned, and she died in agony on 1 March 71 B.C. A year later, Huo Kuang's daughter was nominated empress in her place.

Huo Kuang died in 68 B.C.; he was buried in sumptuous style with the furnishings and trappings, such as a suit of jade, usually reserved for members of the imperial family. If the sources are to be believed, on the occasion of his funeral his close relatives behaved with indecent arrogance and ostentation, flaunting the powers that they believed they held so securely; possibly these details were exaggerated by historians in their relish at recounting the nemesis that followed so conspicuous a case of hubris. Before very long, voices were raised in protest against the powers that the family had held. For the first time, the emperor began to take a personal hand in affairs of state. Huo Kuang's son, Huo Yü, and his great-nephew, Huo Shan, found themselves stripped of their titles and powers, while two statesmen who had dared to criticize the Huo family rose to the fore: Chang An-shih became director of the secretariat; Wei Hsiang, one of the most able men of the day, was appointed chancellor (67 B.C.) at a time when the strength and dignity of that office could be revived.

The moment of crisis arrived when it was revealed how the empress Hsü had met her end. Huo Kuang had himself only learned the truth after the event; shocked as he had been by the information, he had refrained from reporting it and thereby incriminating his wife and possibly himself. It was only after the death of Huo Kuang that the leading members of the Huo family discovered what had occurred. The emperor showed precisely where his feelings lay by nominating his son Liu Shih, who had been born of the empress Hsü before her elevation, to be heir apparent (fourth month, 67 B.C.); and the demotion of Huo Kuang's relatives accompanied the bestowal of a noble title on the empress Hsü's father.

By now the Huo family was fully alive to the acute danger in which it stood and realized that the only chance of survival lay in treason. Two plots were laid, one for the murder of the chancellor, and the second for the deposition of the emperor and his replacement by Huo Yü. Both attempts were to be backed by edicts promulgated in the name of the empress dowager, granddaughter of Huo Kuang, whose edicts had been used to such great effect in 74 B.C. But on this occasion the Huo family was unlucky. News of the plots was disclosed: leading members of the Huo family were eliminated, either by execution or suicide; Huo Hsien's daughter, who as empress was perhaps in the strongest position of all the members of the Huo family, was deposed (September 66 B.C.) and removed from the palace. Only her grand-

daughter, the empress dowager of Chao-ti, not yet twenty-five years old, was allowed to survive; she died eventually in 37 B.C.

The issues at stake: 81 B.C.

There were doubtless many occasions when the senior officials and statesmen of Han met to discuss contemporary political problems. Uniquely we possess a written account of a conference summoned for just such a purpose in 81 B.C. The terms of reference for the meeting were broad; those who were present were ordered to consider the hardships which the people of China were suffering; and although the *Han shu* implies that the discussions concerned little more than the state monopolies, it is evident that those who attended the debate brought far weightier and more fundamental matters under review.

This conclusion is clear from the written account of the debate compiled by Huan K'uan during the reign of the next emperor, Hsüan-ti, and was thus not very far removed in time from the occasion itself. The *Yen-t'ieh lun* (Discourses on salt and iron) is framed in dialogue form; it doubtless presents an idealized and dramatized description of the debate, in which the issues are probably clothed in more extreme terms than those of the conference itself. The modernist spokesmen for the government, who formed one party to the debate, may have included Sang Hung-yang; the other party consisted of the government's critics, who represented a reformist frame of mind. Huan K'uan's account tends to allow more space to the critics than to the spokesmen for the government, who are shown on several occasions to have been worsted in debate. However, the immediate result of the discussions did not correspond with such conclusions, as only the iron agencies in the metropolitan area and the commissions for the state's monopoly of liquor were withdrawn. In view of the differences between the account of the debate and its actual effect, the factual accuracy and validity of the *Discourses* may be questioned; but its value as a summary of the controversial issues of 81 B.C. or shortly thereafter remains unquestioned, and it serves as an important supplementary source to the terse account of the incident in the *Han shu*.

The *Discourses on salt and iron*[142] identifies the major differences of opin-

142 For a translation of sections of this work, see Esson M. Gale, *Discourses on salt and iron: A debate on state control of commerce and industry in ancient China; Chapters I-XIX, translated from the Chinese of Huan K'uan with introduction and notes* (Leiden, 1931; rpt. Taipei, 1967); Esson M. Gale, Peter A. Boodberg, and T. C. Lin, "Discourses on salt and iron (Yen T'ieh Lun: Chaps. XX-XXVIII)," *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 65 (1934), 73–110; and Georges Walter, *Chine, An–81: Dispute sur le sel et le fer, Yantie lun* (Paris, 1978). For a summary of the issues, see Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, Chapter 3.

ion between the modernist and the reformist points of view. In philosophical terms, the modernists saw the universe operating spontaneously within the eternal rhythm of the Five Phases (*wu-hsing*), each one of which rose to prominence by dominating its predecessor. The reformists agreed that the universe worked within such a scheme, but they favored the theory that each phase followed naturally from its predecessor by growth rather than by conquest. In their aims of government, modernists concentrated on the provision of security and material welfare for the population; in seeking to achieve these ends, they saw considerable virtue in controlling work and activities, with a view to attaining general prosperity. The reformist view, however, fastened on the ideals of perfect government, which was designed to bring about the betterment of man by conformity with fundamental moral principles; to achieve this end, they wished to reduce controls, demands for service, and taxation to a minimum, hoping thereby to promote the values of a civilized community.

These principles are spelt out in all parts of the debate, whether they concern general policies, precise measures of government, evaluations of the past, or considerations of the contemporary state of China. The main aim of the modernists was to achieve the greatest possible exploitation of China's resources and the most effective distribution of its products. They justified the imposition of controls on the grounds that they would thus wrest profits from private hands and bring them into those of the state; they wished to encourage manufacture, trade, and transport and believed that a stable coinage was essential for such purposes. They took the view that, thanks to its monopoly of iron, the state could effectively distribute tools of good quality for the use of the peasant; they were glad to make use of conscript laborers to ensure the regular production and transport of these goods; and they hoped to stabilize the price paid for iron goods and salt. As proof of the success of their policies, they pointed to the flourishing state of China's trading centers.

Nothing could shake the belief of the reformist critics that concentration on agriculture would suffice to secure China's well-being. They disparaged the idea that the state could earn profits from its monopolies, believing that such transactions would be of no advantage to the people of China. They preferred to reduce the use of coin to a minimum, and advocated the collection of tax as much as possible in kind rather than money. They pointed to the poor quality of the tools actually produced by the imperial iron agencies and alleged that peasants were charged the same price, whatever the quality of the goods. The reformists also deprecated the misuse of state labor in industrial work, and advocated reducing the demand for labor to a minimum. Against the claim that the controls and state monopolies of

the last few decades had enriched China, they raised the charge that government was oppressive and its exactions harsh. They complained that there were grave disparities between rich and poor, and that the impoverishment of the general population contrasted sharply with the extravagance and luxury of the rich. They alleged that the affluence which could be observed in the city of Ch'ang-an offended against the canons of decency and was a cause of shame instead of pride.

In foreign affairs, the spokesmen for the government insisted on the need to protect Chinese civilization by effective defense measures and by wooing the friendship of some of the non-Chinese peoples in Asia. They believed that the best means of defense lay in taking the offensive, so as to impose a lasting peace on the Hsiung-nu. The critics of the government held that costly expansion had weakened China without guaranteeing its safety; they could not accept that the expenses of campaigns were justifiable. They likewise saw no value in the export-import trade which the modernists approved as a means of increasing China's wealth, reducing that of its opponents, and disposing of its surplus produce.

Modernists relied on the system of laws and punishments as a means of deterring crime and ensuring social stability; they pointed out that it was the pre-imperial states which had followed the advice of Shang Yang and Shen Pu-hai that had grown strong, and not those which had trusted to the ideal moral precepts of the Duke of Chou or Confucius. The reformist spokesmen countered that moral lessons were of greater value than punishment, and complained that the laws, as implemented, tended to treat the population unjustly and inequitably. To the assertion that Shang Yang had shown the way to success, and that it was only those who had followed after him who had failed to put his principles into practice, the reformists countered that Shang Yang's success had been short-lived; that the administration of Ch'in had been founded on unscrupulous principles; and that the proper basis for government lay in the ideals of Chou. While the spokesmen for the government saw little point in training officials on the basis of theory and without reference to the practical needs of government, the reformists thought it essential to inculcate high moral principles at an early stage of an official's training. Conflicting opinions on a number of other matters, such as the sale of offices and the staffing of the agencies of state, were voiced during the course of this remarkable debate.

The views expressed in the *Discourses on salt and iron* reflect the change that had been taking place in political thought since the end of Wu-ti's reign. By the time of Hsüan-ti (r. 74–49 B.C.) and his successors, that change was affecting domestic and foreign policies and leaving its mark on matters such as the expenditures of the palace, the exercise of the laws and

their punishments, and the maintenance of Chinese strength at the perimeter of the empire.

Hsüan-ti and his age

Somewhat exceptionally, the *Han shu* reveals some personal characteristics of Hsüan-ti, the emperor who had been brought up away from the atmosphere of the court and beyond the immediate influences of the palace. A mere eighteen years old when he began his reign, he can only have felt a sense of awe, coupled with a burden of gratitude, toward Huo Kuang, the senior statesman and father-in-law under whose shadow he lived. Yet within six years he had shown considerable strength of mind in determining that punishment should be visited on the Huo family for the wrongs that its members had done to him and his late empress. And even before then he is alleged to have chosen the company of some who, by training and temperament, must have been hostile to the Huo family. The emperor is said to have encouraged a practical and realistic approach to matters of government; and he is praised for insisting that rewards and punishments be applied effectively and correctly. In a conversation which he is reported to have had with his son Liu Shih, the future Yüan-ti (r. 49–33 B.C.), he expressed his distrust of ethical principles as the sole means of governing an empire; he rejected the fashionable assessment of contemporary issues in the light of the ancient kingdom of Chou.[143]

Hsüan-ti's break with the Huo family was due in part to personal reasons. Although there is a ring of truth and a measure of consistency in these accounts of the emperor, they must be tempered by some of the actual policies and decisions of the reign, which are tinged by a reformist attitude rather than the modernist mind that he seemed to have possessed. The more liberal distribution of orders of honor, the tone of a number of imperial edicts, and the administrative decisions that they announced all testify to some divergence in practice from the character and predilections ascribed to the emperor in person. It would seem that the change toward the new outlook may have developed without the emperor's entire approval, and despite some of his own preferences. It may be tentatively suggested that it was during these decades that China's masters realized that neither a totalitarian government based on so-called Legalist principles, nor an impractical reliance on Confucius's ethics, could alone suffice to govern a mighty empire.

143 *HS* 9, p. 277 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 301); *HS* 68, p. 2954; *HS* 78, pp. 3283f.; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 136, 147.

The intellectual background

Hsüan-ti's reign was marked by a comparatively large number of edicts which referred to strange or untoward phenomena, whether they were regarded as omens of imminent good fortune or of disaster. As in the days of Wu-ti, such events were often associated with the services paid to deities worshipped on behalf of the state, such as the supreme powers (*ti*) or the Earth Queen; it is also noticeable that on at least one occasion (second month, 60 B.C.), an edict alluded to the role of Heaven in conferring the blessing of an omen of good fortune.[144]

Phenomena of both types, and the edicts that accompanied them, were followed by symbolic or administrative actions, some of which derived from a reformist rather than a modernist state of mind. The great blessings manifested by Heaven, such as the roosting of beautiful birds at the palace, the fall of honeydew, or the sight of golden dragons, were commemorated for all time by the adoption of reign titles that named these events, and by means of which the years 61–49 B.C. have ever since been enumerated. Edicts proclaimed after reports of adverse portents, such as poor harvests, earthquakes, or untimely changes of climate, took note of changes whereby harsh policies of government might be eliminated and the people's lot improved. Some of the edicts prescribed remedial action, such as reductions in the imperial court's expenditures (70 B.C.), or the price of salt (66 B.C.), or in taxation (64 B.C.).[145]

Since 88 B.C. no emperor had taken a personal part in the observances of the state cults. Wu-ti had been old and ill in his latter years; Chao-ti had been under age until the last three years of his reign. Once Hsüan-ti started taking an active part in government, he resumed the custom of personal participation in these ceremonies from time to time; we hear of him doing so on eight occasions between 61 and 49 B.C.[146]

A sign that times were changing may be seen in respect of certain intellectual, or canonical, questions. Since the time of Wu-ti's edict of 136 B.C., certain texts had featured prominently among the works specified for study by the scholars of the court and for the instruction of those who hoped to enter the civil service. These favored texts had come to have great influence on the intellectual life of the day. But as yet there was no authoritative version or approved interpretation of some of these abstruse writings; differently worded copies of what were quickly becoming China's canonical scriptures were being found from time to time, and the question

144 *HS* 8, p. 262 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 242).
145 *HS* 8, pp. 245, 252, 256 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 213, 227, 233).
146 See Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 168–69.

could easily arise of which particular versions or interpretations should be regarded as orthodox.

Discussions on these matters were to continue intermittently until the end of the imperial age, often at a highly academic level; but frequently such academic differences were used as a cloak behind which highly important differences of ideology could lurk. Attention is given below to the importance of these matters in the Han age (see Chapter 14). It may be noted here that the repeated assembly of lengthy conferences on such canonical questions, culminating in that of the Pavilion of the Stone Canal (51 B.C.), demonstrates the importance attached by contemporaries to the question. As a result of that meeting, certain texts rose to prominence at the expense of others, which were discarded as being inappropriate to the times (for example, priority was now given to the Ku-liang, rather than the Kung-yang commentary on the *Spring and autumn annals*).[147]

The names of two prominent men who were concerned with these issues deserve mention. Hsiao Wang-chih, who is well known for his views on problems of economics and who rose to be imperial counsellor from 59 to 56 B.C., was one of those who had been ordered to join the discussions of 51 B.C. His reformist attitude is clear from his expressed preference for the ideals of Chou, his dislike of the state's interference in the work of individuals, and his objections to further involvement in Central Asia.[148] He is also known for recommending for service K'uang Heng, who was later to play a leading part in reforming China's religious observances. The second name is that of Liu Hsiang (79–8 B.C.), who took part in the discussions as a young man. The result of the discussions certainly accords with the opinions he expressed later in life, whether as a statesman advising on policies, or as a philosopher and imperial librarian whose work contributed substantially to the formation of China's Confucian tradition.[149]

Internal policies

The modernist statesmen of Wu-ti's reign had taken care that the general distributions of orders of honor should take place only rarely. As in the days of Ch'in, so then their proper function was that of state rewards,

147 For these controversies, see Tjan Tjoe Som, *Po hu t'ung: The comprehensive discussions in the White Tiger Hall* (Leiden, 1949, 1952), Vol. 1, pp. 137f.; and Loewe, *Ideas of life and death*, pp. 180f.

148 For Hsiao Wang-chih, see *HS* 78; *HS* 24A, p. 1141 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 193f.); Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 147f., 158f., 223, 232.

149 For example, in upholding the claims of the traditional religious cults, insisting on the correct function of music, and in supporting the sovereignty of the Han house; see Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 210, 279, 300f. *HS* 36, pp. 1924–67 includes a number of statements and memorials ascribed to Liu Hsiang. For his part in collating texts and forming the imperial library, see P. van der Loon, "On the transmission of Kuan-tzu," *TP*, 41:4–5 (1952), 358f.

conferred in return for meritorious service; had they been bestowed too frequently, their value would have been correspondingly lowered. By Hsüan-ti's reign, however, the orders of honor were fulfilling another role, which derived from the ideals of kingship ascribed to Chou: They were used as a measure of the emperor's bounty toward his people and of his loving care for their well-being. General bestowals of these orders and the privileges which went with them were made more frequently from 67 B.C. onward than they had been previously.[150]

The creation of marquisates continued during the reigns of Chao-ti and Hsüan-ti. Sometimes they were given for merit, and the citation specified that they had been earned by suppressing rebels, such as members of the Huo family, or by settling the state of the realm. Sometimes they were given by reason of relationship with imperial consorts; and between 82 and 50 B.C., a total of seventy-four marquisates were given to the sons of kings. Of particular interest are the steps taken in 65 and 62 B.C., which seem to have been intended to evoke the past by way of reaction against the modernist policies of Wu-ti's reign. A search was made for the descendants of those marquisates which had been created at the outset of the dynasty by Kao-ti, and which had either become defunct or had deliberately been brought to an end in 112 B.C. Altogether about 120 such persons were found; in view of the merits earned by their ancestors, they were granted exemption from some of the obligations for state service, and in some cases that bounty was coupled with valuable gifts.[151]

As previously, so during these two reigns more of the kingdoms were split or weakened, either by establishing small new kingdoms or by organizing their territories as commanderies. When the kingdom of Yen was dissolved following the revolt of 80 B.C., its former lands were administered as the commanderies of Po-hai, Cho, and Yen. The small kingdom of Kuang-han, which was created in part of the former kingdom of Yen in 73 B.C., lasted until the end of the Former Han dynasty, as did the other newly created small kingdoms of Kao-mi (founded in 73 B.C.), Huai-yang (63 B.C.), and Tung-p'ing (52 B.C.); two other kingdoms did not last so long (P'ing-kan, from 91 to 56, and Ting-t'ao, from 52 to 49). Six other kingdoms that were brought to an end during the period included Ch'ang-i (from 74 B.C.) and Ch'u (from 69 B.C.).[152] (See map 9.)

A few changes took place in the arrangements for administering the

150 See Loewe, "Aristocratic ranks," pp. 166f.

151 *HS* 8, p. 254 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 230) dates the order for this action in 65 B.C. For its implementation in 62, see entries in the the genealogical tables of the *Han shu*, such as *HS* 16, pp. 545, 546. For the steps taken in 112 B.C., see pp. 158f.

152 The others were Chi-pei (ended in 87 B.C.), Ch'ing-ho (65 B.C.), Chung-shan (55 B.C.) and Kuang-ling (54 B.C.); the last two of these were re-created in 47 B.C., and Ting-t'ao in 25 B.C.



Map 9. The Han empire, A.D. 2

periphery. In Hainan the commandery of Tan-erh was assimilated with that of Chu-ai in 82 B.C.; in the same year Chen-p'an, one of the four commanderies in Korea, was abandoned. In 81 B.C. the new commandery of Chin-ch'eng was created in the northwest by detaching counties from the existing commanderies of T'ien-shui, Lung-hsi, and Chang-i. This reorganization was intended for administrative efficiency and did not derive from new conquests.

Thrift, and a desire to curtail public expenditure and public hardship had been among the virtues ascribed to Wen-ti. A plea to Hsüan-ti, shortly after 66, to cut down expenses may have been part of the reaction that had set in against the extravagant policies of modernist statesmen, and may be regarded as a protest against the expensive spectacles, games, and entertainments which had been put on in Ch'ang-an, in part to impress Wu-ti's visitors from abroad.[153] In the same way, the reformist desire to reduce public expenditure may be seen in the orders given to the office of music to curtail its activities. The office had been founded in 114–113 B.C. to provide the correct musical accompaniment for the religious observances of state. The order for economies in 70 B.C. was the first of several measures that culminated in the abolition of the office in 7 B.C.[154]

Foreign affairs

That the Chinese could maintain their interests in Central Asia at this time was due in no small degree to the internal quarrels and divisions of the Hsiung-nu. Such had been the failure of these peoples to cooperate that at one time they had been split under the leadership of five different *shan-yü*. Simultaneously, a new attitude had been developing among Chinese officials.

The proposed visit of one of the rival *shan-yü* named Hu-han-yeh to the Chinese court in 51 B.C. was welcomed as a sign of peaceful relations with the Hsiung-nu, but different opinions prevailed regarding the treatment which should be accorded to the visitor. Some regarded the visit as an act of homage or submission, whose lessons should be made explicit; others saw in it a golden opportunity to demonstrate the emperor's clemency and goodwill to all men. The question of whether the *shan-yü* should be treated as an inferior subject, whose status ranked below that of the Han kings, or as an honored guest ranking above them, became a controversial issue. Eventually it was decided to treat him generously and honorably as part of

153 *HS* 72, pp. 3062f.; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, p. 140; *HS* 96B, pp. 3928f. (Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 197f.). For a reduction of expenditure ordered in 71, see *HS* 8, p. 245 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 213). 154 See Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, Chapter 6.

a policy of winning the friendship of foreigners by a display of bounty, rather than forcing their submission by strength. This decision conformed with the arguments put forward by the critics of the government in the debate of 81 B.C.[155]

Chinese foreign policy farther afield was also undergoing a change. During Wu-ti's reign (141–87 B.C.), and for some time afterward, it had been marked by Chinese initiatives. The Chinese had been willing to enter into long-term undertakings with foreign peoples that were sealed by matrimonial alliances (such as that with the Wu-sun, ca. 110 B.C.). Military expeditions had been launched to penetrate deep into Central Asia, and Han soldiers had behaved with conspicuous courage. As a result, in some of the Central Asian states the Chinese had managed to establish kings whose loyalties to China could be assured (in Ferghana, 101 B.C.; and Kucha, from 65 B.C.). With the same end in view, Han had also been involved in no less than five plots to have hostile local kings murdered and replaced by Chinese nominees.[156]

In Chao-ti's reign (87–74 B.C.), it had even been possible to set up colonies at Bugur (Lun-t'ai, see map 16, p. 406), as Sang Hung-yang had vainly suggested at an earlier date. There are also signs that Huo Kuang had himself been ready to support a policy of expansion. However, from about 65 B.C. the emphasis seems to have changed; verve and initiative gave way to plans for steady and static colonization. In 61 B.C. Chao Ch'ung-kuo, a veteran who had seen years of service in Central Asia and in fighting the Hsiung-nu, tendered advice of a new sort to the government. He suggested that the best way of consolidating Chinese influence was not by the sporadic dispatch of small task forces, but by the permanent establishment of self-supporting agricultural colonies.[157] When the office of protector-general of the western regions was established under Cheng Chi in 60 or 59 B.C., it was designed as an organ to coordinate colonial activities and to secure peaceful relations with the petty kingdoms of the west; it was not intended as an authority for planning future expansion or

155 *HS* 8, pp. 270f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 256–59); Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 190–93; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 96f., 107.

156 The most conspicuous example was at Cherchen (Lou-lan or Shan-shan), whose king was made drunk and murdered by Chinese desperados at a banquet. In 77 B.C. his head was sent to Ch'ang-an by way of Tun-huang, as has been confirmed by a manuscript strip found nearby. Other cases of Chinese violence concerned the kings of Yü-ch'eng (101 B.C.), Yarkand (So-chü; 65 B.C.), Wu-sun (during Hsüan-ti's reign), and Kashmir (Chi-pin; at an unspecified date). For details of these events, see Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 43f.

157 For Sang Hung-yang's attempt to establish colonies at Bugur, see *HS* 96B, p. 3912 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 166f.); for the establishment under Chao-ti, see *HS* 96B, p. 3916 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 174). For Chao Ch'ung-kuo, see *HS* 69, pp. 2985f.; Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, p. 57; and Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, p. 225.

aggression.[158] The same trend toward retrenchment may be seen in the partial withdrawal from Korea, which was effected in 82 B.C.[159]

REFORM AND DECLINE (49 B.C.–A.D. 6)

At the time of his father's accession in 74 B.C., the future emperor Yüan-ti (r. 49–33 B.C.) had been an infant of some two years; he was no more than eight or nine when he was declared heir apparent in 67. He is said to have been of a different cast of mind from his father, being open to the call of philanthropy and critical of an excessively specialist or legalist attitude toward the problems of the day. According to one report, Hsüan-ti once expressed the fear that it would be his own heir apparent who would bring the dynasty to ruin, and he once made a vain attempt to have the future Yüan-ti supplanted by the son of another consort. Toward the end of his reign Yüan-ti suffered from poor health, and is said to have concentrated his attention on music and frivolities, thus drawing the criticism of some of his moralistic ministers.[160]

The evidence of historical fact permits no judgment of Hsüan-ti's evaluation of his son, or of the validity of the opinion of critics or historians. There is no reason to believe that he exercised a marked influence on any particular decision of state. Indeed, some of the measures that were adopted actually reduced the splendor of the emperor's way of life and his personal comforts, and there is little to show that Yüan-ti was capable either of suggesting such measures in the general interests of the empire, or of opposing them on personal grounds.

Whatever the part played by the new emperor, the accession of Yüan-ti may be taken as the start of a new stage in imperial development. His father's statesmen had initiated the move away from modernist ideas; under his successors, a reformist attitude became the characteristic mark of many decisions, whether they concerned religious observances, domestic issues, economic objectives, or foreign relations. Statesmen now looked specifically to the example of Chou rather than Ch'in; they chose economy and retrenchment in place of expenditure and expansion; and they were open to lifting the controls that had been placed over the daily lives of the people of China. In some instances, such as the reduction of extravagance and mitigation of state punishments, they were successful; in others, such as a proposal to restrict landholdings, their ideas were too extreme to be imple-

158 Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 64.
159 *HS* 7, p. 223 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 160); Gardiner, *The early history of Korea*, p. 18.
160 *HS* 9, p. 277 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 299f.); *HS* 82, p. 3376; *HS* 98, p. 4016; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 151, 155, 161.

mented. Reformism remained the aim of government until the end of the Former Han period, despite short interludes when it was brought into question; later Wang Mang was to inherit reformist ideas and develop them even further than had his predecessors of the reigns of Yüan-ti, Ch'eng-ti (33–7) and Ai-ti (7–1 B.C.).

Domestic policies

One of the basic questions to be brought under review was the situation of the capital city. This arose from a proposal by I Feng, an associate of Hsiao Wang-chih and K'uang Heng who had become an expert in the theories of *yin-yang*, and interpreted dynastic history in the terms of that cycle.[161] His suggestion (46 B.C.) that the seat of the emperor and government should be transferred to Lo-yang was backed by ideological considerations; he wished to sever the dynastic connection with Ch'ang-an, which had been the scene of violence and fighting; in addition it had served as the base of power when the dynasty was being founded and during the expansionist and extravagant days of Wu-ti. Lo-yang, however, evoked the moral virtues and policy of economy ascribed to the kings of Chou. I Feng argued his proposals with some cogency and won a favorable reception from the emperor; but his suggestion was not regarded as practical, and the question was not raised again until A.D. 12. In the meantime Ch'ang-an continued to be enriched. The emperor was continuing to collect bronze vessels which had been turned out by workshops for the adornment of the palace. Some of these treasures found their way into the Shang-lin Palace, situated west of the city, with its hunting grounds, lodges, gardens, and collection of strange animals; this establishment had been greatly enlarged under Wu-ti.

The reigns of Yüan-ti and his successors saw the restoration of some of the kingdoms, usually on a small scale, and sometimes for short periods only. Two of these (Ch'u, refounded in 49 B.C., and Kuang-ling, refounded in 47 B.C.) survived until the end of the Former Han dynasty; others included Ch'ing-ho (47–43 B.C.), Chi-yang (41–34 B.C.), Shan-yang (33–25 B.C.; originally the kingdom of Ch'ang-i), and Kuang-te (19–17 B.C.).[162] One kingdom (Ho-chien) was governed as a commandery between 38 and 32 B.C. Of special interest, in view of their dynastic implications, were the kingdoms of Ting-t'ao, Chung-shan, and Hsin-tu. Ting-t'ao was restored in 25 B.C. and lasted until 5 B.C.; in the meantime one of its kings, Liu Hsin, had been elevated to become heir apparent, and

161 *HS* 75, pp. 3175f.
162 Restored in A.D. 2, together with the creation of Kuang-shih and Kuang-tsung.

later reigned as Ai-ti (7–1 B.C.). Chung-shan became a kingdom again from 42 to 29 B.C.; it reverted to being a commandery until 23, when it was reaffirmed as a kingdom; its king, Liu Chi-tzu, was enthroned as Ai-ti's successor, P'ing-ti, in 1 B.C. The kingdom of Hsin-tu existed from 37 to 23 B.C., and again from 5 B.C.; during the interregnum (16 B.C.), Wang Mang had been given the title of marquis of Hsin-tu.

By far the greater number of marquisates created by Yüan-ti, Ch'eng-ti, and Ai-ti were bestowed on the sons of kings. These totaled one hundred, compared with only six which were classified as rewards for meritorious service, and twenty-five which were conferred on the relations of imperial consorts.

Eunuchs did not exert an excessive influence on political life during the Former Han period, and only a few of their number rose to hold great power. The period did not witness those bitter struggles between eunuchs and other groups that could at times shatter dynastic unity or transform the character of the court, although at least one statesman fell a victim of their enmity. One of the reasons for the failure of eunuchs to seize control of the empire lay in the stand taken against them by reformist statesmen during the reigns of Yüan-ti (49–33) and Ch'eng-ti (33–7 B.C.).

Hitherto Chao Kao, who had served as a minister in the empire of Ch'in, had been the sole conspicuous example of a eunuch who controlled imperial destinies.[163] Subsequently a few men who had suffered castration by way of punishment, either justly or unjustly, had nonetheless contrived to leave their mark on Han China; these included the historian Ssu-ma Ch'ien, who paid the price of praising Li Ling's exploits and defending his conduct at a time of adversity; Li Yen-nien, brother of one of Wu-ti's consorts and known for his activities in the office of music; and Hsü Kuang-han, father of Hsüan-ti's murdered empress, who had been punished most severely for an offense that was both minor and accidental.[164] In lesser capacities, eunuchs served at the imperial court, probably both before and after Wu-ti's reign; and they may well have found themselves in positions within the secretariat, when that office began to grow in importance.[165]

The first eunuchs who rose to direct the secretariat and thereby to carry considerable influence in decisions of state were Hung Kung and Shih Hsien, during the reigns of Hsüan-ti and Yüan-ti. Their enjoyment of the emperor's confidence drew strong criticism from Hsiao Wang-chih, who deprecated an establishment of eunuchs and the proximity to the throne of

163 See Chapter 1 above, pp. 81f.

164 *HS* 97A, p. 3964; Loewe, *Crisis and Conflict*, pp. 53, 124, 195.

165 The *Shang-shu* (named *Chung-shu* when staffed by eunuchs). For the importance of this office, see Chapter 8 below, pp. 499f.

those who had suffered castration. At the time, however, the eunuchs were strong enough to make their views felt to some effect, and it was as a result of their antagonism that Hsiao Wang-chih was forced to commit suicide in 46 B.C.[166] K'uang Heng was among those whose bitter opposition to the eunuchs resulted in the eventual indictment of Shih Hsien and his associates; Liu Hsiang was also involved in this controversy. By 33 B.C. both Hung Kung and Shih Hsien were dead, and no other eunuchs had achieved sufficient prominence to make a bid for the control of the palace in their place; in 29 B.C. the special agency which the eunuchs had staffed (*chung-shu*, palace writers) was abolished.

A number of measures testify to the intentions of the government to reform the administration of justice and to reduce the severities of the punishments prescribed in earlier periods. Such measures concern amnesties, judicial processes, and ransom from punishment.

Between 48 and 7 B.C., general amnesties were proclaimed on eighteen occasions, and although the frequency of these acts of grace was not conspicuously greater than previously, the edicts in which they were announced echo a new tone of government. They expressed the view that the imposition of severe sentences had raised rather than reduced the rate of crime; they alluded to the growth of crime that followed a levy of heavy imposts or failure to ensure that the administration was free of corruption. Apart from the single edict that accompanied the amnesty of 134 B.C., such opinions had not been voiced previously on these occasions. In addition, the amnesties of 47, 46, and 32 B.C. were proudly displayed as attempts of the emperor to redress the imbalance that his incompetence had caused in the cosmos, and which had been revealed through the warnings of Heaven. It was maintained that the amnesty was a means of taking due note of the warning and making amends.[167] At much the same time, orders were being given to reduce the severity of some of the punishments prescribed by law (in 47 and 44 B.C.). In 34 B.C. instructions were given to simplify and shorten judicial processes; lengthy procedures had been interfering seriously with the livelihood of the people.[168]

It had long been the custom of the government to allow criminals the choice of mitigating or even evading their sentences by the payment of commutation. This practice can be traced back to the days of the Ch'in empire; in 97 B.C. the payment of 500,000 coins sufficed to procure

166 *HS* 78, pp. 3284, 3292. This view, expressed in the comment of the Standard History, is subject to some modification in view of the built-in bias against the eunuchs. For Shih Hsien and Hung Kung, see *HS* 93, p. 3726; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, p. 163.

167 See, for example, *HS* 9, pp. 281, 283–84, 303 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 308, 311, 376) for edicts of 47, 46, and 32 B.C. For the complete list of amnesties, see Loewe, "Aristocratic ranks," pp. 167–68.

168 *HS* 9, p. 296 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 334).

mitigation of the death penalty by one degree.[169] These arrangements had appealed to modernist thinkers, because they provided yet another source of revenue; reformist opinion, however, opposed the system because it tended to militate against impartial justice and to favor the rich against the poor, while it had failed to act as a deterrent against crime.

In about 62 B.C., Hsiao Wang-chih had argued vehemently against suggestions that the system be applied in a somewhat different way. It had been proposed that convicted criminals could obtain exemption from further punishment by serving in the campaign to suppress the Ch'iang rebels of the west. Hsiao Wang-chih succeeded in preventing the acceptance of this proposal.[170] Soon after his appointment as imperial counsellor (44 B.C.), Kung Yü raised the matter of commutation of punishments in a long address to the throne on the subject of contemporary evils; he regarded the practice as being one of the basic causes of the decline of standards in public life. We are not informed whether his protest was accepted or his advice implemented.[171]

The economy

Reformist statesmen had long deplored the extravagance of the palace; it consumed resources which could have been put to better use and it dissipated working effort which should properly have been devoted to the production of cereals, hemp, and silk. Shortly after Yüan-ti's accession, a series of measures was introduced to reduce such luxuries, and austerity became the order of the day. In 47 B.C. special establishments designed to provide carriages and horses for imperial use were abolished, together with the reservation of certain lakes and parklands; in the following year the complement of guard units on duty at the palaces was reduced, and officials were ordered to cut down their expenditure; and in 44 B.C. – the year when the state monopolies on salt and iron were temporarily abolished – economies were introduced in imperial banquets and the use of transport.[172] Some of the games which had been staged by way of entertainment were suspended; some of the hunting lodges which were only rarely in use were closed; and the agencies which had been set up in east China to supply the palaces with robes were also shut down. One further measure, also dated in 44 B.C., demonstrates that contemporary statesmen were not simply anx-

169 For Ch'in practice, see Chapter 9 below, pp. 534f. For commutation in 97 B.C., see *HS* 6, p. 205 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 109). For other cases, and a discussion of the principles involved, see A. F. P. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han law* (Leiden, 1955), pp. 205f.

170 *HS* 78, pp. 3275, 3278. 171 *HS* 72, p. 3077.

172 *HS* 9, pp. 281, 284–85 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 306, 312, 314).

ious to curtail expenditure for the sake of economy; they were ready with constructive ideas for the use of the state's resources. Hitherto a quota had been imposed on the number of students who could be sent for instruction under the academicians. Simultaneously with the measures intended to reduce expenditure, the restriction on these numbers was lifted in the hope of bringing more trained men into public service. But owing to the expense of such a change, the quota was reimposed in 41 B.C.[173]

A further measure of economy is of particular interest, as it derived both from financial and ideological considerations; it follows from a step taken during the transitional period of Hsüan-ti's reign. Already in 70 B.C. the office of music had been ordered to reduce its official complement; a similar order was given in 48 B.C.; and fifteen years later the office was again ordered to suspend some of its more extravagant practices, such as the provision of female choirs at state ritual observances. Finally, in 7 B.C. the office was abolished. At that time it was employing a total of 829 virtuosi as singers and instrumentalists. Over half were dismissed outright, and the remainder were transferred to other offices; but it was still possible to find an orchestra of 128 players for imperial audiences and 62 performers at religious services.[174]

The office of music had commanded the services of a large number of skilled persons, particularly before orders had been given for its curtailment. But the account of its abolition lays more emphasis on the depraved function of the office than on the need to save money. By the end of its time, the office had become associated with the performance of music of a base and even improper type that was likely to arouse the passions and stimulate licentious conduct. Some centuries previously, Confucius himself had expressed his disapproval of such music, and it is not surprising that reformists sought to suppress an organization that had been performing it on behalf of the state. They believed that it would bring a deleterious influence to bear on contemporary morals.

One official who might serve as an example of the new trend in government was Shao Hsin-ch'en, a native of central China whose scholastic proficiency had earned him a place at court.[175] He served first as head of a county, and then as governor of Nan-yang commandery, in which post he did his utmost to enrich the population in his charge. He gave a good example of industry by his personal work in the fields, traveling tirelessly to inspect supplies of water and to improve irrigation facilities. These measures led to a considerable increase in production in the commandery,

172 *HS* 9, pp. 281, 284–85 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 306, 312, 314).
173 *HS* 9, pp. 285, 291 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 315, 324).
174 Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, Chapter 6.
175 *HS* 89, pp. 3641f.

and with it of the amount of grain in stock. The governor also succeeded in persuading the population to reach agreement regarding the use of water in the interests of fair distribution. He prevented the outbreak of disputes over property by setting up inscribed boundary stones, and he made great efforts to encourage economy. He threatened legal proceedings against the families of subordinate officials who preferred a life of idleness and luxury to one of hard work in the fields; he won the loyal support of his population, whose number doubled.

Shao Hsin-ch'en was duly rewarded for these achievements; he was promoted, first to be governor of Ho-nan commandery, and in 33 B.C. to be superintendent of the lesser treasury. It was in that capacity that he put forward suggestions for economizing at the level of central government. He proposed that the upkeep of some of the palace buildings which were used only rarely should be discontinued; that the office of music should be abolished; that troupes of entertainers and the arms and equipment of the formal palace guards should be substantially reduced; and he urged that the expense of fuel used to force the growth of certain plants and vegetables out of season was not justifiable. It may be added that Shao Hsin-ch'en was a successful official of high rank fortunate enough to die naturally of old age while still in his post.

Besides attempts to reduce expenditure, early in the new reign Yüan-ti's advisers proposed other measures that were also designed to counter the forward-looking policies of Wu-ti's modernist statesmen. The principal champion of change was Kung Yü, who became imperial counsellor in 44 B.C. Kung Yü was strongly opposed to employment of the state's conscript labor in the mines or for minting coin; he reckoned that such ventures accounted for over 100,000 working days annually, and he objected to the obligation placed on farmers to devote some of their efforts to the production of food and clothing required by the miners and workers in industry.

Kung Yü actually succeeded in having the state's monopolies of salt and iron withdrawn in 44 B.C. But before long the loss of revenue became serious, and the monopolies were restored in 41 B.C.[176] Kung Yü also closed some of the granaries which had been set up as a means of stabilizing the prices of staple goods. Keng Shou-ch'ang, a man of a practical bent who was anxious to reduce to a minimum the labor spent on transporting grain, had had them set up in 54 B.C.[177]

Kung Yü made one further proposal which was not accepted, even for a short time; this was nothing less than the replacement of a monetary by a

176 *HS* 9, p. 291 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 324); *HS* 72, p. 3075.
177 *HS* 8, p. 268 (Dubs, *HFHD*, II, p. 253); *HS* 24A, p. 1141 (Swann, *Food and money*, p. 195).

premonetary economy. He argued that the love of money was the root of all evil; it attracted individuals away from the productive work of the fields to trade and industry, where large profits could be earned for less work. The use of cash enabled the rich to hoard their wealth; they used it to indulge in personal luxuries and for further profiteering, since they could easily raise interest of 20 percent on the loans that they floated. The subsequent temptation to the peasantry, to quit the land for what appeared to be a direct road to fortune, was all but irresistible, for they were bemused by the sight of coin. But if they failed to make their way they would end up penniless, and banditry was their only resource.

Kung Yü proposed the closure of the government's mints; the collection of all revenue in grain or textiles; and the payment of official stipends entirely in kind, in place of the monthly amounts of cash and grain to which officials had become accustomed. Kung Yü's case may have been plausible, but it evoked little response in view of the place of money in the economy of the time. Had highly graded civil servants received large stocks of grain as their pay, they could well have been faced with difficulties of disposal, and they could hardly have been expected to support Kung Yü's proposal.

Right at the end of the Former Han period an even more drastic measure was suggested, equally unsuccessfully. This was at the instigation of Shih Tan, who became marshal of state in 7 B.C. Like Kung Yü, he had been impressed by the gross imbalance between rich and poor, and like Tung Chung-shu, he sought to relieve distress by a redistribution of landholdings. He proposed a series of restrictions on the extent of land and the number of slaves that could be owned, with variations that depended on social status (the possession of orders of honor, or a marquisate).[178] The proposal was referred for discussion and accepted in principle; but many of those in high places, such as the families of the imperial consorts Fu and Ting, and Ai-ti's minion Tung Hsien, stood to lose heavily by the suggestion, and it was not implemented. At just the same time (7 B.C.), the government was ordering economies similar to those that were adopted in 47–44 B.C., with a view to reducing expenditure.

Since the repair of the dikes of the Yellow River in 109 B.C., a number of efforts had been made to prevent floods. Between the years 95 and 66 B.C., secondary outlets and supplementary channels had been dug to relieve the heavy press of water downstream; but sufficient attention had not been paid to the need for dredging and maintenance, and major breaches oc-

178 *HS* 11, p. 336 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 21); *HS* 24A, p. 1142 (Swann, *Food and money*, p. 200); *HS* 86, pp. 3503f.; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 267f.

curred in 39 and 29 B.C. In 30 B.C. heavy rains had given rise to floods in other parts of China, and panic had broken out in the city of Ch'ang-an, for fear of impending disaster.[179] In 29 B.C. responsibility for the disastrous inundations was fastened on Yin Chung, the imperial counsellor. He became the scapegoat for contemporary ills and paid the penalty for holding high office by committing suicide.

Thereafter the superintendent of agriculture took a hand, and by his prompt and effective action succeeded in redeeming a dangerous situation. He mounted a full-scale relief operation, with the use of five hundred boats, to evacuate the inhabitants of threatened areas. A new series of dikes was built to divert the stream into auxiliary channels so as to prevent further floods. The work was accomplished with conscript labor after thirty-six days, and its completion was celebrated by the adoption of the reign title *ho-p'ing* (Pacification of the River; 28–25 B.C.). This achievement served to contain the next threat of floods, which occurred in 27 B.C.[180]

By a lucky chance, the *Han shu* includes a summary of basic information on the state of the empire in A.D. 1–2. This takes the form of a complete list of the administrative units of that date, together with returns made for the annual registration of the population for purposes of taxation.[181] Following the last adjustments, the empire of A.D. 1–2 comprised 83 commanderies and 20 kingdoms, which claimed a total of 1,577 subordinate units such as counties and marquisates. The total of the registered population, which is found from the sum of the figures given for individual commanderies and kingdoms, amounted to 12,366,470 households, or 57,671,400 individuals.

Less information is available for the counties and their towns, as figures are included for ten examples only. No reasons are given for their selection, but it is likely that they illustrate the size of some of the major cities in the empire. For this reason, they can hardly serve as a guide for the size of the remaining 1,500 urban centers that probably existed. As an example, the figures given for the capital city and county in which it was situated were 80,800 households or 246,200 individuals; it has been suggested that the inhabitants of the city proper numbered something over 80,000.[182]

As might be expected, the population was dispersed very unevenly throughout the provinces, with a heavy concentration in the productive valleys of the

179 Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 154f., 190f. 180 *HS* 29, pp. 1688f.

181 See the entries given for each of the kingdoms and commanderies in *HS* 28, and the statistical summary in *HS* 28B, pp. 1639f. The figures given there are not the accurate sums of those given for individual administrative units throughout the treatise.

182 Utsunomiya Kiyoyoshi, *Kandai shakai keizaishi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1955), pp. 115–17; see also Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," pp. 19f.

Yellow River and the Huai River, and in the fertile basin of Szechwan. (See map 10, p. 241) Figures given in the *Han shu* for the extent of arable land are somewhat difficult to interpret; but it would seem that there was insufficient land under the plough to yield adequate supplies for the whole population of both grain and hemp, the basic material needed for clothing. Finally, the chapter carries a note of all special commissioners established by the government to manage particular types of production, such as salt, iron, fruit, and textiles.[183]

Religious questions

Earlier emperors had taken care to maintain due observances to the powers who were believed to watch over the destiny of the dynasty.[184] Wu-ti (r. 141–87 B.C.) attended personally at the services rendered to the ancient gods, whose existence had been recognized long before the days of the Ch'in empire; at the height of the modernist period he had inaugurated services to other deities, the Earth Queen (Hou-t'u) and the Grand Unity (T'ai-i). Such services had been continued by Hsüan-ti (r. 74–49 B.C.); his successor, Yüan-ti (r. 49–33 B.C.), in turn graced the ceremonies with his presence on at least eleven occasions between 47 and 37. Changes, however, were on the way.

Early in Ch'eng-ti's reign (33–7 B.C.), a whole host of shrines which had been dedicated to minor deities, or served by various types of intermediary, were abolished.[185] But a far more drastic change concerned the sites where the major state cults were maintained, the manner of worship performed there, and above all their object. This change was largely due to the persuasive powers of K'uang Heng, who urged it as a restoration of earlier practices that had become corrupt and were in need of purging. He argued that the emperor's attendance at traditional sites of worship such as Yung,

183 Further details will be found below in Chapter 10, pp. 602f. For a study of the population counts and their accuracy, see Hans Bielenstein, "The census of China during the period 2–742 A.D.," *BMFEA*, 19 (1947), 125–163. While the *Han shu* includes a statement that the count refers to the year A.D. 2, it was probably based on the registration conducted in the previous year. The totals of population actually given in the *Han shu*, of 12,233,062 households and 59,594,978 individuals, do not agree with the sum of the counts given for each of the commanderies and kingdoms and repeated in the text here. Similarly, the figure of 1,587 (or 1,578) that is given for subordinate units should be corrected to 1,577. Opinions regarding China's productivity at this time depend on the somewhat questionable figures given in the *Han shu* for the extent of arable land (*HS* 28B, p. 1640), and estimates of the yield that are quoted by Han statesmen for purposes of argument. The only reliable information is that provided in records of administration, for the rations distributed to servicemen and their families; and it may be questioned how far such figures may be applied to the population in general.

184 For this subject, see Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, Chapter 5.

185 *HS* 25B, p. 1257. Out of a total of 203 at the ancient sites of Yung, only 15 survived. In the provinces, 208 were left out of a total of 683.

Kan-ch'üan, or Fen-yin, which lay at some distance from Ch'ang-an, involved heavy expenditure and popular hardship which should be relieved. For similar reasons he preferred austerity and simplicity to the elaborate extravagance that had marked the ceremonies hitherto. Most significant of all, the Han dynasty was to forsake the gods of Ch'in in favor of the god of Chou.

It will be recalled that Kao-ti had added the worship of a fifth power, of the color black, to that of the four powers Ch'in had acknowledged.[186] That innovation had been dated 205 B.C.; but these ceremonies were now to give way to the worship of Heaven, the god from whom the kings of Chou had traced their right to temporal authority. Beginning in 31 B.C. the emperor took part in services to Heaven and Earth at shrines which had been newly erected on the southern and northern sides of Ch'ang-an. Expensive progresses to the more distant sites were no longer necessary; earthenware vessels or calabashes replaced jades at the plain altars which were now chosen in preference to the gaily colored and highly decorated ones of the past.

But as yet these changes were by no means permanent. In 31 B.C. they had been attended by controversy; in particular, they had aroused the opposition of the highly respected Liu Hsiang, who argued the need to preserve continuity in dynastic practice. Of immediate importance was the connection drawn between the worship of the state gods and the provision of an imperial heir. As yet Ch'eng-ti had failed to produce a successor, and it had been hoped that with the change of religious practice, the new power would bless the dynasty and the emperor with the gift of a son. Unfortunately no such response was forthcoming: The need to secure the future of the state grew more urgent, and religious practices suffered change and reversion in 14, 7, and 4 B.C. Finally, in A.D. 5 the cults of Heaven and Earth were reinstituted at Ch'ang-an, largely thanks to the influence of Wang Mang; and from here they were taken to the capital of the restored dynasty at Lo-yang in A.D. 26.

A similar pattern may be seen in the history of the services paid to the souls of the emperor's forbears. The custom of establishing shrines for this purpose may be traced back to an edict of 195 B.C., which ordered their erection in honor of Kao-ti, both in the capital city and the provinces.[187] Hui-ti had visited one of the shrines on the occasion of his accession, and their importance had been stressed in an edict of 166 B.C.[188] By the time of Yüan-ti the upkeep of services at the shrines, with their daily quota of

186 *HS* 25A, p. 1210. See p. 119 above. 187 *HS* 2, p. 88 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 178).
188 *HS* 1B, p. 80 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 145); *HS* 4, p. 126 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 257).

offerings and sacrifices, had grown to alarming proportions. The figures given for the expenditure needed at the 167 shrines of the provinces and the 176 sites of worship at Ch'ang-an are quoted with some precision and thus bear a ring of truth, as if they are cited from duly audited accounts. The sum of the meals offered annually was 24,455; the shrines were guarded by no less than 45,129 men; 12,147 priests, cooks, and musicians were employed, together with an unspecified number of men who were in charge of the sacrificial animals.[189]

It is not surprising that, at a time of other economies, the question of these services came under review. By about 40 B.C., considerable reductions had been effected. Services at some two hundred shrines had been discontinued; but those built in honor of Kao-ti, Wen-ti, and Wu-ti were singled out for retention because those emperors were thought to merit special treatment. Full services at all the shrines were restored in 34 B.C., at a time when Yüan-ti lay ill; in the following year, when it had been shown that intercessions there had failed to save his life, the majority of the shrines were again abolished. In 28 B.C. they were restored again, when all possible measures were being taken to secure an heir for his successor, Ch'eng-ti. In 7 B.C. fifty-three officials made a plea to reduce the number of shrines once more, and on this occasion the name of Hsüan-ti was added to those of the other emperors who deserved special consideration.[190] During the reign of P'ing-ti (1 B.C.–A.D. 6), Wang Mang reaffirmed the principle of retaining shrines in order to render honor where honor was due.

Another change derived from reformist principles likewise concerned religious practice, the control of the population, and the expenditure of state. The first of the Ch'in emperors had set a precedent for the construction of a magnificent mausoleum as his final resting place; although Wen-ti (180–157) is said to have expressed himself strongly against the custom, it is probable that the Han emperors took care to equip their tombs with the luxuries due to their station.[191] In addition to the expense of building the tombs and furnishing them with jewelry, embellishments, and supplies, estates had sometimes been designated to provide an income for the upkeep of the sites, and this practice detracted from the state's revenue. In addition, enforced migrations of the population had sometimes been ordered to ensure that sufficient persons would be available to look after the tombs

189 *HS* 73, p. 3115; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 179f.

190 *HS* 73, pp. 3125f.

191 For the first Ch'in emperor's tomb, see Chapter 1, p. 82. At the time of writing, no excavation of the Han emperors' tombs has been accomplished, but the lavish burials of kings such as the king of Chung-shan (died 112 B.C.), whose tomb has been uncovered at Man-ch'eng, suggests that imperial practice was no less extravagant. For Wen-ti's views, see *HS* 36, p. 1951.

and to provide for their services. Sometimes members of rich or prominent families had been forcibly moved in response to such orders.

Such migrations had occurred on seven occasions from the time of Kao-ti onward, in connection with the preparation of the mausoleums of an emperor or his consort situated to the west and north of Ch'ang-an.[192] It is possible that these occasions were deliberately exploited by statesmen who saw an opportunity to move powerful families away from their ancestral homes, where they had established a power base. Right up to the time of Hsüan-ti (r. 74–49 B.C.), such schemes had received support, in one instance from Huang Pa, chancellor from 55 to 51, who had himself been moved for this purpose.[193] But no migrations, except one, are recorded for this purpose during the reigns of Yüan-ti, Ch'eng-ti, Ai-ti, or P'ing-ti. An edict of 40 B.C. spells out the desire of the government to allow the population to remain in its permanent place of domicile, and to prevent the dissatisfaction that could so easily arise from splitting families who were subject to forced migration.[194] However, as happened with the cults of state and the services to the imperial shrines, a reversion to earlier practice took place momentarily under Ch'eng-ti (r. 33–7 B.C.). That emperor visited the preparations that were in hand for his own tomb in 20 B.C. and ordered migrations of the population there for the usual purposes; but in 16 B.C. the migrations were suspended.[195] At much the same time Liu Hsiang had been expressing himself forcefully against extravagant funerary practices.[196] In the sixth month of 5 B.C. a migration was ordered to prepare for the tomb of the empress Ting, but in the following month the government proclaimed its intention of taking no such action in the future.[197]

Foreign affairs

During the last fifty years of the Former Han period, foreign policy was marked by a reluctance to expand, and at times by a refusal to engage potential enemies. On the positive side, China was in general free from provocation by the Hsiung-nu, who lacked sufficient unity to consolidate or strengthen their position or to pose a threat to China. Important foreign dignitaries paid visits to Ch'ang-an from time to time, such as the friendly king of Kucha (Ch'iu-tzu) in the reigns of Ch'eng-ti (33–7) and Ai-ti (7–1 B.C.);

192 Fujikawa Masakazu, *Kandai ni okeru reigaku no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1968), pp. 174f.; Shen-hsi sheng po-wu-kuan, ed., *Hsi-an li-shih shu-lüeh* (Sian, 1959), pp. 65f.

193 *HS* 89, p. 3627; Fujikawa, *Kandai ni okeru reigaku no kenkyū*, p. 177.

194 *HS* 9, p. 292 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 327).

195 *HS* 10, p. 320 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 401). For the effect of one of these migrations on Pan Ku, the historian, see *HS* 100A, p. 4198.

196 *HS* 36, pp. 1952f.

197 *HS* 11, p. 340 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 31).

in 1 B.C. one of the rulers (*k'un-mi*) of the Wu-sun came to the Han court, together with one of the leaders (*shan-yü*) of the Hsiung-nu.[198] Meanwhile the colonial settlements in Central Asia were being maintained under the leadership of the protector-general; there are records of incumbents who held that post until A.D. 23.[199] Simultaneously, a further step had been taken to coordinate the work of the colonies and to provide them with military assistance in an emergency. In 48 B.C. a new post was established. The incumbent, who held the rank of colonel (*hsiao-wei*), was to found colonies in lands that had been formerly held by the ruler of Turfan (Chü-shih) and that were now open to penetration by the Hsiung-nu; he was to protect Chinese interests in this zone, which lay in an intermediate position between China and the foreigners. This post was certainly occupied as late as A.D. 16.[200]

In other respects, the Chinese were anxious to avoid further involvement. In 46 B.C. the commandery of Chu-ai, on Hainan Island, was abandoned. The second commandery which had been founded on the island had previously been amalgamated with Chu-ai in 82 B.C.; the withdrawal of 46 B.C. followed the outbreak of a local rebellion, and the conclusion that retention of a Chinese outpost on the island would be too demanding both in human and in monetary terms.[201] Four years later the Ch'iang tribes of the west staged a revolt, at a time when China was suffering from a famine. Feng Feng-shih, who had had considerable experience in maintaining order in these areas, asked for a force of forty thousand men with which to crush the rising. But the government was swayed by the need to conserve its strength, and sent him out with a totally inadequate force of twelve thousand. Such false economy defeated its own aims; Yüan-ti's statesmen were eventually forced to dispatch a further sixty thousand men before Feng Feng-shih was able to restore order.[202]

The most conspicuous instance in these decades in which a Chinese government showed its lack of purpose occurred in 36 B.C.[203] At the time one of the more powerful leaders of the Hsiung-nu, named Chih-chih, was

198 *HS* 96B, pp. 3910, 3917 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 161, 176).

199 First established in 60 or 59 B.C., when Cheng Chi was appointed (see p. 197 above). As there is no complete list of incumbents, it cannot be stated for certain that the post was filled continuously until A.D. 23. Officials are known by name for all years except 46–36, 28–24, 19–12, and 10–1 B.C.; see Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 64.

200 The post was entitled *wu-chi hsiao-wei*, and at one time it may have been split into two, the *wu hsiao-wei* and the *chi hsiao-wei*, *wu* and *chi* being the fifth and sixth members of the series of ten terms used for enumeration (the ten celestial stems). See *HS* 96A, p. 3874 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 63); *HS* 96B, p. 3924 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 189); Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 79, note 63.

201 *HS* 7, p. 223 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 160); *HS* 9, p. 283 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 310).

202 *HS* 79, p. 3296. The figures are subject to the usual doubts about their validity; see Chapter 1 above, pp. 98f.

203 *HS* 70, pp. 3007f.; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, Chapter 7.

resentful of Chinese policy; he was jealous of the friendly reception that had been accorded to his rival *shan-yü* Hu-han-yeh, while his own overtures had been rejected. By way of revenge, Chih-chih sought help from Sogdiana (K'ang-chü); he hoped to damage China's interests in Central Asia by such actions as raiding or capturing Chinese envoys, and by attacking China's ally, the Wu-sun. Potentially the situation could have become very dangerous, as all lines of communication could easily have been cut; and it was entirely due to the initiative of two officers who were on the spot that the danger was averted. Ch'en T'ang was serving in a comparatively junior position. Acting entirely on his own authority, he made out the documents needed to call out forces to attack Chih-chih. Subsequently he obtained the connivance and help of Kan Yen-shou, the protector-general; together they succeeded in defeating and killing Chih-chih.

The two officers announced their exploit to their superiors in Ch'ang-an by the traditional means of forwarding there the head of the principal enemy they had conquered; the wrangle that they might well have expected duly followed. For, on the face of it, their crime was grave; they had proclaimed an imperial edict without possessing the authority to do so. Only the success of their brilliant venture could save them from dire punishment. The government was in no mood to congratulate the two officers on their triumph or to reward them as heroes; nor was it willing to exploit their victory by further expansion. Objections were raised, principally by K'uang Heng, against rewarding the officers in any way, and it was only at the insistence of Liu Hsiang that a marquisate was finally conferred on Kan Yen-shou, and a lesser marquisate (*kuan-nei hou*) on Ch'en T'ang. After Kan Yen-shou's death, K'uang Heng took a further opportunity to have Ch'en T'ang reduced in status.

The government's shabby treatment of two of its most heroic servants demonstrates its reluctance to engage in foreign ventures at this time; there was the risk that any reward which they received would encourage others to display initiative and involve China in unwanted expensive ventures. Precisely the same attitude had been adopted thirty years previously, when Feng Feng-shih had been promoting Chinese advances in Central Asia (65 B.C.).[204]

Further steps derived from the same view of foreign relations. Sogdiana had in the end turned against Chih-chih, and even supplied troops to help Ch'en T'ang in his final battle. When the question arose of the relations that should be maintained with Sogdiana, the Han government would not countenance a full-scale alliance backed by a marriage settlement. Simi-

204 *HS* 79, p. 3294; *HS* 96A, p. 3897 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 141).

larly, Chinese relations with Kashmir (Chi-pin) had been established in the time of Wu-ti (141–87), and severed during Yüan-ti's reign (49–33 B.C.). A proposal to reopen relations during Ch'eng-ti's reign (33–7 B.C.) was refused, on the grounds that, although Kashmir may have had much to gain from such contacts, it had no real desire for China's friendship and was merely seeking material advantage out of self-interest.[205]

Dynastic problems and the succession

Ch'eng-ti was the son of Yüan-ti and Wang Cheng-chün who, as empress dowager, was destined to play an important role in molding dynastic destinies in the next few decades. Born while his father was still heir apparent, the child had gained the affection of his grandfather, Hsüan-ti. Shortly after the latter's death, he was nominated as heir apparent to the new emperor; by the time of his succession in 33 B.C. he was in his nineteenth year.[206]

In his youth, Ch'eng-ti is said to have shown a marked love of learning; according to one anecdote he had learned to appreciate the value of circumspect behavior toward his superiors.[207] The allegation that later in life he gave way to indulgence in wine, women, and song may derive in part from the bias of the historians; for the authors of the *Han shu* were members of the Pan family and thus related to one of the women on whom the emperor had graciously, but perhaps unfortunately, bestowed his attentions. But whatever the bias may have been, there is some support for the view that Ch'eng-ti lacked strength or nobility of character and that he was given to frivolous self-indulgence. The music of Cheng, symbolic of decadence and indulgence, and decried as lascivious, was much in vogue at his court; and after 20 B.C. he started the habit of traveling incognito in Ch'ang-an, in pursuit of pleasures such as cockfighting.[208] It is suggested that it was on account of such weaknesses of character that his father had thought of replacing him as heir apparent by the son of another consort named Fu, but his father's hesitation may equally well have resulted from the pressure brought to bear on him by the Fu family itself.

The future Ch'eng-ti owed his continuation in the role of heir apparent to two statesmen who are well known for their reformist views. One of them, K'uang Heng, took the opportunity to deliver a homily to the new

205 *HS* 96A, p. 3885 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 107f.); Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 244f.

206 The principal sources for this section will be found in *HS* 10, 97B and 98. See Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 356f., 366f.; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 160f., 252f., and 264f.

207 *HS* 10, p. 301 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 373f.).

208 *HS* 22, pp. 1071f.; *HS* 10, p. 316 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 395); *HS* 27B (a), p. 1368; *HS* 97B, p. 3999.

emperor shortly after his accession, enjoining him to model his conduct on that of the better kings of Chou; Shih Tan, the other statesman to whom Ch'eng-ti partly owed his throne, was to propose the limitation on property in 7 B.C.[209] There is no evidence to suggest that the emperor himself possessed any views on contemporary politics or influenced decisions of state in any marked degree.

Ch'eng-ti had been married to a daughter of Hsü Chia, cousin of Yüan-ti's mother, and thus a relation of that very empress Hsü who had fallen a victim to the ambitions of the Huo family in 71 B.C. His consort was duly proclaimed empress in 31 B.C., but her failure to produce a male heir who survived infancy was one of the underlying reasons for dynastic discord in the reigns of Ch'eng-ti and his successors. As told, the story reveals depths of jealousy and ruthlessness that would shame any royal family, and once again it is necessary to beware of bias which the historians may have introduced.[210] In brief, the emperor was attracted by the charms of a girl of low origins with pronounced skills as a musician and dancer; these gifts had earned her the title Fei-yen, or Flying Swallow, and a place in one of the princesses' households. Both Chao Fei-yen and her sister gained the favors and attention of the emperor, and by 18 B.C. they had succeeded in having the empress Hsü deposed, after charging her with the practice of black magic. Similar accusations hurled against the imperial consort of the Pan family failed in their objective owing to her native wit; she chose to withdraw from the danger of the court. The way to advancement now lay open to the Chao sisters and their family.

Chao Fei-yen was duly declared empress in 16 B.C., but neither she nor her sister, who held an honored place among the other consorts, produced a male heir. Their position came under severe threat during the next four years, when two sons were born to Ch'eng-ti by other women, one a slave girl and the other from among the regular complement of concubines. However, both infants were put to death at the emperor's orders, and possibly by his own hand, to prevent members of another family ousting Chao Fei-yen and her sister from their paramount positions.

Meanwhile affairs of state and the all-important question of the succession were subject to other influences, in particular from the growing strength of the Wang family and the rise to prominence of two other families by virtue of marriage with the imperial family.

During Ch'eng-ti's reign the Wang family succeeded in establishing its position by precisely those means that had eluded the Huo family some

209 *HS* 81, pp. 3338f., 3341f.; *HS* 10, p. 301 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 374); *HS* 82, p. 3376.
210 For full details, see Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 365f.

fifty years previously; it all but established a de facto hereditary tenure by its members of one of the most powerful offices in the empire. Shortly after the death of Yüan-ti and the elevation of his consort to be the empress dowager Wang, her brother Wang Feng became the marshal of state (32 B.C.); as such he bore responsibility for leading the secretariat and enjoyed considerable power. As marshal he was followed in turn by four members of the Wang family; the last of these, Wang Mang, was appointed at the beginning of 7 B.C., some four months before Ch'eng-ti's death.[211]

The problem of the succession had long exercised the minds of statesmen and those seeking power, since the emperor had failed to produce a male heir born of a legitimately acknowledged consort.[212] When the question was brought up in 8 B.C., there were two possible candidates. One was Liu Hsin, grandson of Yüan-ti's consort of the Fu family and thus a half-nephew of Ch'eng-ti. His mother came from the Ting family; he had been appointed king of Ting-t'ao in 22 B.C., when he had been only three years old; and his candidacy was supported by Ch'eng-ti's consort Chao (sister of his empress Chao) and Wang Ken, marshal of state at the time. As a result of the representations put forward by all leading statesmen except K'ung Kuang, he was declared heir apparent on a day corresponding with 20 March 8 B.C.; he duly reigned as Ai-ti from May 7 B.C. until August 1 B.C.[213]

The candidate who was passed over, Liu Hsing, had been king of Chung-shan since 23 B.C. In terms of relationship he was closer to Ch'eng-ti than his successful rival, being a half-brother. His mother had been Yüan-ti's consort of the Feng family, daughter of the Feng Feng-shih who had achieved considerable success in Central Asia. Liu Hsing died in September 8 B.C., and it was his son Liu Chi-tzu who reigned as P'ing-ti from 1 B.C. to A.D. 6.

For the Wang family, Ai-ti's reign was an unhappy interlude during which its fortunes suffered a setback. There was obvious cause for rivalry with the new upstart families of Chao, Fu, and Ting; as those families rose to prominence, so did the Wang family fall into decline. Shortly after Ai-ti's accession, Wang Mang was dismissed from his post of marshal of state; in the next few years a number of members of the Fu and Ting families attained high-ranking posts or received marquisates. Eventually, after the death of Ai-ti (1 B.C.), Wang Mang staged a comeback, and it became the turn of Ch'eng-ti's dowager empress Chao to be relieved of her honorific title and to be degraded.

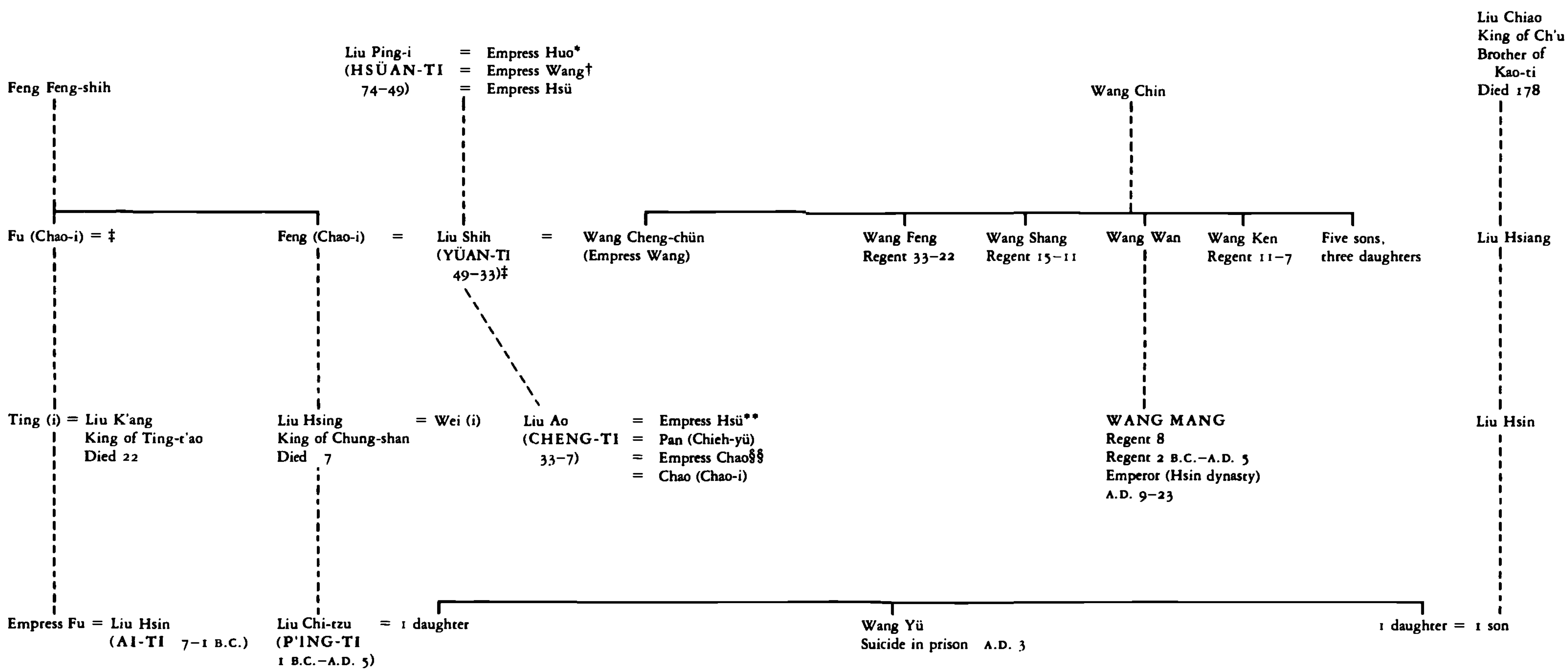
211 The appointment to marshal of state was held by Wang Feng (33–22 B.C.), Wang Yin (22–15 B.C.), Wang Shang (15–11 B.C.), Wang Ken (11–7 B.C.), and Wang Mang (7 B.C.).

212 *HS* 81, pp. 3354f.; *HS* 97B, pp. 3999f.; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 264f.

213 *HS* 11, p. 333 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 15f.).

TABLE 8

The imperial succession: Hsüan-ti to P'ing-ti



*Daughter of Huo Kuang.
†Later entitled Ch'iung-cheng T'ai hou to distinguish her from Yüan-ti's emptess; died 16 B.C.
‡Yüan-ti married (i) Fu, (ii) Feng, and (iii) Wang Cheng-chün.
**Daughter of Hsü Chia.
§§Called Chao Fei-yen.

The Fu and Ting families may have received some encouragement from Ai-ti in the hope of offsetting the Wang family and its influence, but they were not conspicuously successful. Beginning with Fu Hsi, their members held the title of marshal of state from 6 B.C. until 1 B.C. Fu Hsi, however, is described as possessing integrity, and it is possible that he objected to the claims of some of his relations for honorific titles.[214] In addition, a hard core of reformist opinion expressed itself against the rise of the new families in a number of controversies that may be regarded as symbolic. Shih Tan, the staunch reformist who had tried to restrict the extent of property holdings, argued against conferring honorific titles on the two principal females of the family. K'ung Kuang took a firm stand against the provision of an imposing residence for the dowager empress Fu; in addition to the principle that was involved, he wished to prevent her from exercising undue influence on matters of state.[215]

The historians credit Ai-ti with the intention of ruling with the same degree of personal strength as that ascribed to Wu-ti or Hsüan-ti.[216] Such hopes as he may have entertained of doing so were thwarted by his own chronic ill health, the influence of the consorts' families, and his captivation by Tung Hsien, his catamite. The speedy rise of that young man to favor; his perpetual attendance on the emperor, who was not yet eighteen at the time of his accession; and his accumulation of a very large fortune not unnaturally drew the envy and hatred of the Fu and Ting families.[217] Their positions, however, were considerably weakened by the deaths of the two empresses dowager in 5 B.C. and 2 B.C. In the second month of 2 B.C., Tung Hsien became marshal of state, at the early age of twenty-one. At one time the emperor even mentioned the possibility of abdicating in favor of his minion; one of Wang Mang's nephews rebuked him for so irresponsible a suggestion.[218]

Ai-ti died on 15 August 1 B.C., without an heir, and events moved swiftly in favor of the Wang family. The grand empress dowager Wang, who had been Yüan-ti's consort, was still alive; by virtue of seniority and status she clearly possessed the requisite authority for issuing edicts and making the necessary arrangements to ensure the succession, and in doing so she could claim to be following the precedent set in 74 B.C. The day after the emperor's death, Tung Hsien was dismissed and degraded, and he immediately chose suicide in preference to disgrace. Wang Mang was appointed marshal of state with full powers of leading the secretariat.

He was determined to prevent the rival families of consorts from chal-

214 *HS* 82, pp. 3380f. 215 *HS* 81, p. 3356; *HS* 86, p. 3505.
216 *HS* 11, p. 345 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 38).
217 *HS* 93, p. 3733. 218 *HS* 93, p. 3738.

lenging his position again. There soon followed the degradation of the empress dowager Chao, the surviving empress of Ch'eng-ti, and the posthumous degradation of Ai-ti's empresses Ting and Fu; this last step was taken to the extreme of desecrating their tombs. Liu Chi-tzu, son of the candidate for the throne who had been passed over in 7 B.C., was selected to be the new emperor P'ing-ti. He was then in his ninth year.[219]

In such circumstances none could question the actual exercise of authority by Wang Mang and his aunt; and by having his daughter married to the new boy emperor, he put the final seal of security to his position. But the situation changed radically with the death of P'ing-ti in A.D. 6.[220] Very soon Wang Mang's enemies were putting it about that he had murdered the emperor, but the truth of this charge was never proved. Whatever the circumstances may have been, there remains one compelling reason why Wang Mang is unlikely to have been guilty of such a crime. On previous occasions in Han history it had been shown that the strongest and most powerful position in the state was that of a man or woman who stood as parent, guardian, or regent of a young emperor. Wang Mang, who was in his forty-fifth year at the time of Ai-ti's death, could hardly have been more favorably placed, with a boy emperor installed and married to his own daughter, and with hopes already kindling for the birth of an heir to the imperial throne who would be his own grandson. The death of P'ing-ti would thus run counter to his own interests, and it is improbable that Wang Mang would have taken steps to bring it about. The immediate sequel may have owed something to his attempt to create a new situation equally favorable to his own plans.

P'ing-ti died on 3 February A.D. 6.[221] By now the line of descent from Yüan-ti had died out, and the new emperor must be selected from the descendants of Hsüan-ti. These included no less than five kings and forty-eight marquises, but all were rejected in favor of a two-year-old infant, Liu Ying. The grand empress dowager Wang issued a formal edict naming Wang Mang regent; it specified that his position of trust would be comparable with that of the famous Duke of Chou, the altruistic regent of King Ch'eng of that dynasty in the eleventh century B.C. By these means, the formalities of the situation were completely regular; in April Liu Ying was duly nominated heir apparent, and three months later Wang Mang was given the title of acting emperor.[222]

The imperial succession had become subject to controversy on several

219 *HS* 12, p. 347 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 61f.); *HS* 97B, pp. 3998f.
220 *HS* 12, p. 360 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 85); *HS* 84, p. 3426.
221 *HS* 99A, pp. 4078f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 217f.).
222 *HS* 99A, pp. 4080–82 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 221–25).

occasions from the time of Yüan-ti onward. Various opinions were expressed in the form of the advice or remonstrances offered to the throne; various steps were taken to validate constitutional procedure; and both the principles that were invoked and the decisions that were taken formed important precedents in the tradition of imperial government. At a time when Yüan-ti was thinking of changing the line of succession, the reformist statesman K'uang Heng insisted on the overriding claims of a legitimate empress and her son, and the need to relegate other consorts and their descendants to the lower level that they merited.[223] When eventually an heir was being chosen to succeed Ch'eng-ti, conflicting claims were voiced on behalf of the emperor's half-brother and his half-nephew. Each party cited support from canonical texts that laid down guidelines for correct behavior and protocol. In one case, K'ung Kuang argued that as the next of kin possessed a superior claim, Ch'eng-ti's half-brother, who was himself the son of an emperor, should succeed. The opposing party, who formed the majority, could quote authority of equal weight for the view that the son of a brother is comparable with a son; and in the event, it was the half-nephew who was chosen.[224]

P'ing-ti and Liu Ying were the final examples in the Former Han period in which a minor or an infant was enthroned to reign under the protection and auspices of others. Although the safe and obvious precedent to quote for setting up a regent could be found in the Duke of Chou, there was no forgetting that Huo Kuang had also rendered distinguished service in that capacity. As in 74 B.C., so again on the deaths of Ai-ti and P'ing-ti, constitutional authority was vested in the empress dowager in the absence of a duly nominated successor to the throne.

Finally, on at least one occasion an official saw fit to refer to the sacred nature of the emperor's charge, by way of rebuke to his sovereign. This occurred when Ai-ti was proposing, perhaps by way of jest, to follow the example of the blessed Yao's abdication in favor of Shun, in mythical antiquity, and to hand over the control of the world to Tung Hsien. It was a relative of Wang Mang who reminded the young emperor that the rule of the world derived from Kao-ti, and that it was not the private possession of a particular incumbent: "Your majesty has inherited charge of the ancestral shrines," he continued, "and it is right that that charge should be transmitted to your descendants of the future, in unceasing continuity. The imperial inheritance is a matter of supreme importance which does not call for a jest from the Son of Heaven."[225]

223 *HS* 81, pp. 3338f. 224 *HS* 81, pp. 3354f. 225 *HS* 93, p. 3738.

Fin de siècle

Political instability and dynastic uncertainty marked the forty years that followed the accession of Ch'eng-ti in 33 B.C. Favoritism was the order of the day at court, and the highest posts of state were bestowed to suit arbitrary whim or short-lived expedient. The mood of the times was varied. There were some who were oppressed by a feeling of *fin de siècle* and felt that dynastic strength needed renewal; some may have been thinking nostalgically of the strength and discipline known in the heyday of Wu-ti's empire; and many were quick to note omens of change or disaster in strange occurrences of nature. On a popular level, the cult of the Queen Mother of the West swept through China in 3 B.C., attracting the support of those who sought salvation through religious means.[226]

In politics the modernist attitude rose to the fore for a short while in the person of Chu Po.[227] He was a man of humble origins, without the advantages of a scholastic training that were enjoyed by many of his contemporaries in public life. His outlook was that of a man of military daring rather than that of a civil official devoted to the cultivation of the arts. As he rose in public service, he sought to introduce a note of realism into the conduct of the administration, which he felt to be inhibited, outmoded, and misdirected. He perceived a need to govern China not with an eye to tradition, but with a view to the needs of the contemporary world.

At the same time, there were many of a reformist frame of mind who shared Tung Chung-shu's belief that strange phenomena betokened warnings from Heaven. Leading statesmen seized on such occurrences as a means of criticizing the throne. For example, it was possible to detect an excess of *yin* in phenomena such as floods or an eclipse, and to interpret them as complementing an excess of female influence in the palace or in the councils of state. A notable example of the attention paid to strange events occurred in 29 B.C., when a solar eclipse (5 January) coincided with earth tremors that were felt in the imperial palace that same night. Specialists in these matters, such as Tu Ch'in and Ku Yung, were quick to seize on the events as a means of criticizing current policies.[228]

Chu Po[229] held a variety of posts in provincial and central government, and had earned a reputation for maintaining a rigorous discipline over his subordinates and ensuring the efficiency of his administration. He rose to become imperial counsellor and then chancellor, in the fourth month of 5

226 See Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, pp. 98–101. 227 Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 260f.
228 *HS* 60, p. 2671; *HS* 85, p. 3444. 229 Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 260f.

B.C.; but by the eighth month he had been accused of treason and forced to commit suicide. His fall was due partly to the times and partly to his own character. He had little sympathy with the view of life that was in fashion, and the manner in which he opposed his rivals seems to have been clumsy and brash. But the short period in which he held high office is remarkable for an attempt made by others to initiate a dynastic revival, in ideological terms.

During Ch'eng-ti's reign, specialists in calendrical reckoning and esoteric matters, such as Kan Chung-k'o and Hsia Ho-liang, had claimed that they had foreknowledge of dynastic change. According to them, the house of Liu was approaching the end of its allotted span.[230] The suggestion that the dynasty stood in need of renewal received support from recent circumstances, such as Ch'eng-ti's failure to produce an heir, the many adverse phenomena that had been reported, and the poor health of the emperor.[231] Doubtless to the disgust of many, the idea carried conviction in high places, and an edict of the sixth month, 5 B.C., proclaimed the adoption of a new reign title to take effect immediately.[232] The expression chosen for the purpose was *t'ai-ch'u yüan-chiang*, The Initiation of the Grand Beginning, and it carried several implications. Not only did it denote the dawn of a new age; it also evoked the older expression Grand Beginning (*t'ai-ch'u*), adopted for the same purpose in 104 B.C., at the height of the successes of modernist government. But the hopes of a dynastic renaissance were short-lived in 5 B.C. Within two months, all the provisions of the edict except its amnesty had been revoked and its promoter, Hsia Ho-liang, had suffered the death penalty. Hopes that the introduction of the new reign title would usher in an era of renewed imperial might and prosperity failed to be realized. The emperor still lay stricken by illness; and Chu Po the chancellor died at his own hand. These incidents may be taken as symbolic of the failure of the final bid to reassert imperial strength in the Former Han dynasty.

230 Tjan, *Po hu t'ung*, Vol. I, pp. 124f.; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, p. 278.
231 *HS* 75, p. 3192. 232 *HS* 11, p. 340 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 29).

CHAPTER 3

WANG MANG, THE RESTORATION OF THE HAN DYNASTY, AND LATER HAN

In the state cult of the Han dynasty, Heaven was the supreme deity, a deity which was believed to guide the fate of the world directly. The emperor, or Son of Heaven, was its representative and ruled by its favor. A dynastic founder, as the first recipient of Heaven's mandate, was chosen over all others for his personal merit. The last emperor of a dynasty lost the mandate, because he and his house were no longer fit to rule. The coming of the mandate was heralded by auspicious omens, the decline of Heaven's favor was announced by portents.[1]

The belief in the Mandate of Heaven deeply influenced Chinese historiography. The ancient historians quoted, suppressed, twisted, and even falsified evidence to show why the dynastic founder had been worthy of Heaven's blessing, a worthiness about which he personally had no doubt. His emphasis was on legitimacy. Those who unsuccessfully opposed the mandate were manifestly inferior men, whose lack of moral caliber was borne out by their fates. There the ancient historian leaned in the opposite direction: He wrote biased biographies for the most important rebels and pretenders, who by their actions had placed themselves outside ordered society. Further he did not go; no additional biographies were compiled for the chief assistants of those who had turned against the legitimate dynasty.

This is the historiographical situation, which is a major obstacle to a fair assessment of such men as Wang Mang, who overthrew the Former Han house and attempted to found his own dynasty. Had he been successful, he would have basked in the glow of Heaven's approval, and the ancient historian would have compared him to the great dynastic founders of the past. But with the collapse of his government and the restoration of the Han dynasty, Wang Mang automatically became a victim of historiography and was reduced from Son of Heaven to usurper. Even his features changed.

1 For the development of this cult during the Former Han, see Michael Loewe, *Crisis and conflict in Han China* (London, 1974), Chapter 5; and Chapter 13 below, p. 733. For portents, see Hans Bielenstein, "An interpretation of the portents of the Ts'ien-Han-shu," *BMFEA*, 22 (1950), 127–43.

The Han Chinese were firm believers in the art of physiognomy. A face to them was the mirror of character, and they attempted to deduce a person's future from his features. This led to the assumption that dynastic founders must have certain looks in common, and the historian, quite untruthfully, attributed to them hairiness, large noses, and prominent foreheads. Conversely, this pseudoscientific approach demanded that the moral inferiority of pretenders or usurpers should be revealed by their physiognomies. Wang Mang is therefore described as having had a large mouth and a receding chin, bulging eyes with brilliant pupils, and a loud voice which was hoarse.[2]

The modern scholar, then, is faced by the problem of blatant bias. When Pan Ku (d. A.D. 92) compiled the *Han shu* or *Former Han history*, he wrote from the partisan viewpoint of the restoration. Although Wang Mang had been emperor for fifteen years, he did not merit a history of his own. All he was allowed was a biography at the end of the *Han shu* (chapters 99A-C), a text which is a sustained criticism of the man and his reign. Little is said about him and his supporters elsewhere in the work, and the *Hou-Han shu* or *Later Han history*[3] gives few additional details on his fall. It is on this meager material that Wang Mang must be judged.

THE RISE OF WANG MANG

The Wang clan sprang from the lesser gentry which was locally influential but not nationally important. Later a genealogy was fabricated, claiming that Wang Mang was descended from Shun and the Yellow Emperor (Huang-ti), sovereigns hallowed in Chinese mythology, by way of the dukes of Ch'i of the house of T'ien. But the descent from the dukes is unconvincing, and Shun and

2 For Wang Mang's features, see *Han shu* 99B, p. 4124 (Homer H. Dubs, *The history of the Former Han dynasty* [Baltimore, 1938–55], Vol. III, p. 312). *HS* 1A, p. 2 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 29) describes the features of Kao-ti; for the recognition that such features were indications of suitability to rule as emperor, see *HS* 100A, p. 4211; and Hans Bielenstein, *The restoration of the Han dynasty*, Vol. I, *BMFEA*, 26 (1954), p. 99.

3 The *Hou-Han shu* was compiled by Fan Yeh (398–446), at a time when archival materials no longer were available (Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. I, pp. 9f.). He had to base his work on some twenty-odd earlier histories, among which the *Tung-kuan Han-chi* or *Han record of the Eastern Lodge* was the most important. This text received its name from an imperial library in the Southern Palace of Lo-yang, in which most of the work was written. The first instalment was ordered by the emperor in A.D. 72 and was compiled by Pan Ku and others. (For Pan Ku's difficulties in compilation, see Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. IV, *BMFEA*, 51 [1979], p. 121.) The second instalment was ordered in 120, the third in 151 or 152, and the fourth between 172 and 177. The fifth and last instalment was privately written between 220 and 225, after the fall of the Later Han dynasty. As a consecutive compilation, the *Tung-kuan Han-chi* provided Fan Yeh with a rich variety of contemporary materials. Today only fragments of the text remain. For translations of *HS* 99, see, in addition to Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, Hans O. H. Stange, *Die Monographie über Wang Mang* (*Ts'ien-Han-shu Kap.* 99) (Leipzig, 1939); and Clyde B. Sargent, *Wang Mang: A translation of the official account of his rise to power as given in the History of the Former Han dynasty* (Shanghai, 1947).

the Yellow Emperor were legendary figures. Fraudulent genealogies were, of course, common in China, and it is significant that a similar pedigree had been invented for the founder of the Former Han.[4] These genealogies were mere propaganda, intended to legitimize new dynasties.

Wang Mang's reliable genealogy begins with his great-great-grandfather, who filled no office and apparently lived as a country gentleman in what is now northern Shantung.[5] Wang Mang's great-grandfather moved from there to a place on the central part of the Great Plain, just north of the Yellow River, and was briefly appointed to a lesser office in the central government. Wang Mang's grandfather held a lowly post in the ministry of the superintendent of trials (*t'ing-wei*) in the capital, and would have proceeded into oblivion had it not been for one of his daughters. This man (Wang Ho: style, Wang Weng-ju) had eight sons and four daughters, and it was the second daughter, Cheng-chün, who raised her clan to national importance. She was born in 71 B.C., and in 54 was selected to enter the harem of Hsüan-ti (r. 74–49 B.C.). Shortly thereafter, she was transferred to the harem of the heir apparent, the future Yüan-ti (r. 49–33 B.C.). In 51 B.C., Cheng-chün gave birth to the future Ch'eng-ti (r. 33–7 B.C.), and on 12 April 48 she became the empress.[6] Her father was simultaneously ennobled as marquis. During the reign of Yüan-ti the Wang clan wielded no exceptional power, and if Cheng-chün's own life span had been the normal one for Han times, her nephew Wang Mang might never have ascended the throne. It was the longevity of this empress, who did not die until 3 February A.D. 13, which made the dominance of her clan and the rise of Wang Mang possible.

Yüan-ti died on 8 July 33 B.C.; Ch'eng-ti succeeded him on 4 August, and Wang Cheng-chün became the empress dowager. The new ruler was about eighteen years old and, presumably influenced by his mother, immediately appointed her eldest brother marshal of state and general in chief or regent.[7] This was Wang Feng, who had inherited his father's marquisate in 42. Soon thereafter, Feng's surviving brothers were enfeoffed as marquises. Ch'eng-ti proved himself to be a charming and pleasure-loving man, easily dominated by women. He had no stomach for government, and was content to let his uncles rule for him. Wang Feng died in office in 22 B.C., and was succeeded as regent by Wang Yin, his own first cousin and also first cousin of the empress dowager. Wang Yin died in office in 16 B.C., whereupon Wang Shang, a brother of the late Feng, became regent. Shang

4 *HS* 100A, p. 4211. 5 *HS* 98, pp. 4013f.
6 *HS* 9, p. 279 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 302).
7 For Ch'eng-ti's character and actions, see *HS* 10, p. 301 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 374); *HS* 98, p. 4017.

died in early 11 B.C. He was followed as regent by his brother Wang Ken, who resigned on 16 November 8 B.C. On November 28 of the same year, Wang Mang was appointed regent at the age of about thirty-seven.[8]

Wang Mang had been born in 45 B.C. as the second son of Wang Wan, a brother of Wang Cheng-chün. Wang Wan had died too early to be made a marquis together with the other brothers of the empress. But although Wang Mang grew up without a father, and his elder brother also had died young, he received a good Confucian education and studied extensively. In 22 B.C. he attended his uncle Wang Feng through the several months of this regent's last illness. He had an official position by that time, whose nature is not specified by the sources. On the dying regent's request, Wang Mang was transferred to become *she-sheng hsiao-wei* (colonel of archers who shoot by sound) and simultaneously *huang-men lang*, a gentleman of the Yellow Gates. The first title implied that he became one of the commanders of the Northern Army, which consisted of professional soldiers stationed at the capital. But Wang Mang's command was certainly intended as a sinecure. "Gentleman of the Yellow Gates" was a supernumerary title granted to advisers of the emperor. Later, Wang Mang was appointed commandant of cavalry (*chi tu-wei*), another sinecure; counselor of the palace (*kuang-lu ta-fu*), in which capacity he offered advice to the emperor; and palace attendant, a supernumerary title. On 12 June 16 B.C., he was ennobled as marquis of Hsin-tu. Such was Wang Mang's career until the moment when he became regent.[9]

Wang Mang's biography, relentless in its bias and partisanship for the Han, states disapprovingly that he humbled himself, studied to the point of exhaustion, served his widowed mother and sister-in-law, and educated his fatherless nephew. He paid minute attention to the rules of proper conduct in waiting on his uncles. He neglected his appearance while looking after the dying Wang Feng. The more he advanced in rank, the more modest he became. He distributed his wealth to others, so that his household had no surplus. He associated with well-known men. His empty fame flourished and spread.

Such criticism insinuates that Wang Mang reached his high position not by genuine ability, but by dishonest posturing. A historian favorable to Wang Mang would have gone to the opposite extreme, praising him for filial piety and brotherly love, for earnest devotion to study, and for rising to prominence through Confucian virtue. In reality, Wang Mang obviously was an able, ambitious, and when necessary, ruthless man. He had a talent

8 For the appointment of members of the Wang family as regents, see *HS* 10, p. 302 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 375); *HS* 19B, pp. 830, 835, 838–39, 841–42.

9 *HS* 99A, pp. 4039–40 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 125f.).

for attracting followers, and was unusually broad in his interests. His affection for his relatives may have been perfectly sincere. It is out of the question that he could have schemed for the throne at this early date.

Wang Mang's appointment as regent has a much simpler explanation than unscrupulous posturing. Four regents of the Wang family had preceded him, all belonging to the generation of the empress dowager, née Wang. Three of them had been her brothers, and the other was her only first cousin on record. When Wang Ken resigned in 8 B.C., one brother only of the empress dowager remained alive. He was in his sixties and had an unsavory reputation. This made it necessary to go to the next generation, that of Ch'eng-ti's first cousins. Wang Mang was undoubtedly the most able and politically astute member of that generation.

At this moment in his career, Wang Mang suffered a stroke of extremely bad luck. Ch'eng-ti died on 17 April 7 B.C., and having no surviving sons, was succeeded by his nephew, known as Ai-ti.[10] The new ruler had a mind of his own, and to the extent that his poor health permitted, attempted a personal and strong government. In addition, the Ting clan of his mother and the Fu clan of his grandmother intrigued actively against the Wang clan. Wang Cheng-chün who, in accordance with tradition, was considered the adoptive grandmother of Ai-ti, could not easily be removed, and was granted the title of grand empress dowager. But Wang Mang was forced to resign. His resignation was at first tactfully refused and then accepted on 27 August 7 B.C. Heaped with honors, he withdrew to his residence in the capital. He remained there until the summer of 5 B.C., when he was ordered to depart and live in his marquisate.[11]

Wang Mang's exile did not sit well with his many supporters, who clamored for his recall. Ai-ti yielded, and in 2 B.C. permitted Wang Mang to return to the capital and live there in quiet retirement. In the following year, Ai-ti died on 15 August, and Wang Mang was able to return to power. This was possible only because the emperor's mother and grandmother had died in 5 and 2 B.C., respectively, so that with the emperor's own death the grand empress dowager née Wang, as undisputed head of the imperial clan, had authority to solve the constitutional crisis.[12] Ai-ti had died without sons and without designating an heir. But he had

10 *HS* 11, p. 334 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 17). For the choice of Ch'eng-ti's successor, see Chapter 2 above, p. 215.

11 *HS* 11, p. 334 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 19); *HS* 99A, pp. 4041f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 130f.).

12 For precedents whereby an empress had wielded authority at a time of dynastic discord, see Michael Loewe, "The authority of the emperors of Ch'in and Han," in ***State and law in East Asia: Festschrift Karl Bünger***, ed. Dieter Eikemeier and Herbert Franke (Wiesbaden, 1981), pp. 103f.; and Chapter 2 above, p. 184. For subsequent examples, see pp. 274f. below.

thought of ceding the throne to his minion Tung Hsien, and on his deathbed had entrusted the imperial seals to him. The grand empress dowager was consequently faced with the problem of removing Tung Hsien and of choosing the next emperor from the Han house.

Immediately after Ai-ti's death, the imperial seals were retrieved, and on the same day Wang Mang was summoned to the palace. He advised the grand empress dowager to strip Tung Hsien of office and noble rank. This was done on the following day, 16 August, whereupon Tung Hsien killed himself. On 17 August Wang Mang was reappointed regent. He quickly outmaneuvered the distaff relatives of Ai-ti and sent them away from the capital.[13]

The dynastic succession was now solved without difficulty. Ever since the death of Yüan-ti (33 B.C.), his descendants had been on the throne. Only one of these remained alive, a first cousin of Ai-ti. He was the legitimate heir, and Wang Mang counseled the grand empress dowager to summon him. This was P'ing-ti, who was enthroned on 17 October 1 B.C. The coincidence that the new ruler had been born in 9 B.C., and was thus a mere child, cannot have displeased Wang Mang.

Wang Mang's power grew during the brief nominal reign of P'ing-ti. He placed his allies and supporters in key positions, and enjoyed genuine popularity among officials and scholars. The grand empress dowager was content to delegate all real authority to him. His administration seems to have been competent and successful, including the improvement of provincial schools in A.D. 3; the enlargement of the Academy in A.D. 4; a conference in the capital on classical texts, astronomy-astrology, pitchpipes, philology, and divination in A.D. 5; the cutting of a new road from the Wei River valley through the difficult mountain ranges south of it to Szechwan in A.D. 5; and peace on the borders. In A.D. 1, Wang Mang had received the new and imposing title of Duke Giving Tranquility to the Han (An Han kung). On 16 March A.D. 4, his daughter, who probably had been born in 9 B.C., was enthroned as P'ing-ti's consort, and Wang Mang was granted additional honors.[14] As father-in-law of the young emperor, and possibly grandfather of the next ruler, he could face the future with equanimity and look forward to a long stay in power. But on 3 February A.D. 6, P'ing-ti suddenly died.[15]

It was later claimed that Wang Mang had murdered the emperor by poison. This charge was made for the first time in A.D. 7, and later

13 For Tung Hsien, see *HS* 93, pp. 3733f.; *HS* 12, p. 347 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 61); Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 282f.; and see Chapter 2 above, pp. 218–220.

14 *HS* 99A, pp. 4047, 4066f., 4069, 4076 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 146, 184f., 191f., 212).

15 *HS* 99A, p. 4078 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 217).

repeated during the civil war that followed Wang Mang's fall.[16] No evidence exists to prove or disprove the accusation. Wang Mang would not have been the only man in Chinese history to remove rivals from his path to the throne. Such murders were commonplace, and the dynastic historians were lenient to those whom they considered legitimate rulers. But accusations of regicide were also stereotypes, and circumstantial evidence strongly favors Wang Mang's innocence. He had only recently married his daughter to P'ing-ti. The latter was still a minor, and Wang Mang's power was secure. It is doubtful whether he had as yet decided to overthrow the dynasty. He had no way of gauging how determined the imperial clan might be in opposition to a coup, or how strong the following of the Han house was in the countryside. Murdering the emperor could easily have precipitated a crisis from which Wang Mang might have emerged the loser. The death of P'ing-ti may therefore have been greatly inconvenient to Wang Mang. His immediate problem now was how to retain power without setting the imperial house against him.

With P'ing-ti, the last descendant of Yüan-ti had died. It was necessary to move a step back in the genealogy, and to choose a successor from among the descendants of Hsüan-ti (d. 48 B.C.) and his concubines, a very large field indeed. The eligible candidates were five kings and close to fifty marquises. If Wang Mang selected a mature and competent man, his regency would come to an abrupt end. If he chose a child, it would be evident to all that he intended to prolong his power. The empress Lü had followed the latter course in 184 B.C., when she enthroned a child of her own family while fraudulently claiming it to be a son of Hui-ti.[17] No less than four child emperors were similarly enthroned during the Later Han to prolong the power of consort families. In this dilemma, Wang Mang decided to hold on to the regency, and to risk the wrath of the imperial house by picking the youngest of the candidates. This was a great-great-grandson of Hsüan-ti, Liu Ying, who had been born in A.D. 5. The child was not formally enthroned. First Wang Mang had himself appointed acting emperor. Then, on April 17, A.D. 6, Liu Ying was made imperial heir apparent and given the title of young prince.[18]

The reaction of the imperial house was swift and futile. The first to rise against Wang Mang was a marquis, who in May or June of A.D. 6 assembled a small force and attempted to take the capital of his commandery. Not only was he utterly defeated, but a paternal relative surrendered voluntarily to Wang Mang and presented a memorial of abject apology and

16 *HS* 99A, p. 4087 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 235). 17 See Chapter 2 above, p. 135.
18 *HS* 99A, pp. 4079–82 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 218–25).

flattery. On 1 July of the same year, the grand empress dowager reconfirmed Wang Mang as acting emperor, which can only be considered a declaration of success.[19] Subsequent rebellions by two other marquises of the imperial house – it is not known whether jointly or separately – were so unimportant that they are not even dated by the ancient historian.

A more serious uprising took place in the central part of the Great Plain, starting in October of A.D. 7. It was led by Chai I, son of a distinguished statesman, who enthroned a member of the imperial house, set up an administration, and accused Wang Mang of having poisoned P'ing-ti. A secondary rebellion broke out near the capital. Wang Mang took energetic countermeasures, including a proclamation that he would turn over the government to the young prince on his majority. Within three months, the uprising had been quelled.[20] Henceforth Wang Mang faced no serious opposition.

The ease with which Wang Mang had defeated the insurgents, and the acceptance of his government by practically all officials, must have been the turning point in his career, persuading him that the demoralized imperial house had lost all support. He shared with his contemporaries not only the belief in the Mandate of Heaven, but also in a cyclical succession of Five Phases or Elements (*wu-hsing*: wood, fire, earth, metal, water), these phases in turn being correlated with directions, colors, animals, and so on.

Each dynasty ruled under the power of one element, and fell when this element was replaced by the next in the sequence. After some disagreement, fire had been identified as the element of the Han, which meant that red was the color of this dynasty.[21] But the Han had been in power for a long time, and signs of decline were there for all to see. Many intellectuals, including members of the imperial house, believed that the Mandate of Heaven was shifting, and that the element earth was in the ascendancy. All Wang Mang needed to do was persuade the general public by skillful propaganda that the moment of change had come. This was achieved by the fabrication of auspicious omens.

The dynastic founders of ancient China and their supporters were masters of applied psychology. They interpreted prophecies in the classical and apocryphal texts to their advantage, invented prognostications, manufac-

19 *HS* 99A, p. 4086 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 233).
20 *HS* 99A, p. 4088 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 237).
21 For the importance of the *wu-hsing* in asserting and supporting claims to exercise sovereignty, see Michael Loewe, "Water, earth and fire – the symbols of the Han dynasty," *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens/Hamburg*, 125 (1979), 63–68; and Loewe, "The authority of the emperors of Ch'in and Han," pp. 90f. See also Chapter 1 above, p. 77; Chapter 2, p. 172; and Chapter 13 below, pp. 737f.

tured auspicious omens, and circulated political songs against their enemies. Wang Mang and his followers were expert practitioners of this subtle art. Beginning in A.D. 6 and accelerating after A.D. 8, one omen after the other was reported to the throne: the discovery of inscribed stones and a stone ox, the appearance of Heaven's envoy in a dream, the spontaneous opening up of a well, the finding of a bronze casket with two inscribed envelope covers, and the like. The message in all these cases was the same: Wang Mang should ascend the throne. Did he not descend from the Yellow Emperor? Yellow was the color of the phase "earth." The ox was the animal correlated with earth. It all added up, as, of course, it was intended to do: Wang Mang was the Yellow Emperor and next in line to found a dynasty.

Wang Mang's manipulation of the public and the methods later used to support the restoration of the Han dynasty were identical. In both cases, clever politicians understood mass psychology. But being rational and superstitious at the same time, they eventually came to believe their own propaganda. It is only in their historiographical presentation that the two campaigns differ. The victory of the Later Han legitimized its earlier propaganda as new state orthodoxy. Fabricated prophecies changed into true messages from Heaven proving the worthiness of the founder. Wang Mang became a usurper whose propaganda consisted of shoddy psychological maneuvers, the despicable acts of a man rejected by Heaven.

As in many political movements, it is not easy to see to what extent Wang Mang led or was pushed. He could not have risen to become acting emperor without real ability, but he also headed a large and powerful faction whose members expected to reap benefits through him. The stream of auspicious omens reported to the throne brought pressure on Wang Mang and may, in the end, have forced his hand.[22] On 10 January A.D. 9, he took the irrevocable step. He declared the Han defunct, ascended the throne himself, and called his dynasty the Hsin or New.[23] The young prince, with unusual leniency, was dismissed but not killed, raised in seclusion, and eventually married to a granddaughter of Wang Mang. New ministers were appointed. The Han nobles were demoted to commoners in A.D. 10. Two uprisings of the former imperial house in A.D. 9, and a minor mutiny in Central Asia in A.D. 10, were put down quickly. Wang Mang was in firm control of the government, with his capital established at Ch'ang-an.

22 For example, the discovery of a stone bearing a message declaring that Wang Mang should become emperor (*HS* 99A, pp. 4078f. [Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 218f.]) and the report of a dream interpreted to the same effect (*HS* 99A, p. 4093 [Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 250]).

23 *HS* 99A, pp. 4095–96 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 255f.).

THE REIGN OF WANG MANG (A.D. 9–23)

Because of the paucity of information, only the main outline of Wang Mang's reign is known, and that is the reason why his policies have been so much debated and misunderstood. He ordered new denominations of currency in A.D. 7, 9, 10, and 14, the first and two last of which amounted to a debasement of the coinage. In A.D. 7, the marquises and nobles of lower ranks were required to exchange all gold in their possession against less than its full value in coin. In A.D. 9, the bureaucracy was reorganized and new titles were introduced. A further change of provincial titles and a wholesale change of the names of commanderies and counties followed in A.D. 14.[24] The buying and selling of private slaves was prohibited in A.D. 9. During the same year a land reform was attempted, according to which all able-bodied men were to receive a standard allotment of land. Families with more land than the formula allowed were to distribute the surplus to land-poor relatives and neighbors. Sale of land was prohibited.

In A.D. 10, state monopolies were ordered on trade in fermented liquor, salt, and iron implements, on casting of coins, and on income derived from mountains and marshes. In addition, the market for essential commodities, such as grain, cloth, and silk, was to be stabilized by government purchases when prices were low and sales when prices were high. Government storehouses were established for that purpose in five important cities. The monopolies and the price stabilization program were reaffirmed in A.D. 17. After A.D. 10, a tax of one-tenth of their incomes was levied on hunters, fishermen, sericulturists, artisans, professional men, and merchants. Finally, in A.D. 16 regulations were issued according to which the stipends of officials should be reduced during bad years in proportion to the state of the harvest.[25]

How are these policies of Wang Mang to be interpreted? Hu Shih has offered a favorable opinion, claiming that Wang Mang was a socialist, a visionary, and a selfless ruler, who failed because China was not yet ready for such a man.[26] Homer H. Dubs came to accept the partisan criticism of

24 The passage in the *Han shu* recording this is extremely obscure. For the changes of titles and nomenclature, see *HS* 99B, pp. 4103f., 4136f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 269, 341f.). The names adopted for the commanderies and counties are included under the individual entries for those units in *HS* 28.

25 For changes in the economy, see *HS* 99A, p. 4087 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 234); *HS* 99B, pp. 4108–12, 4118, 4122, 4142 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 281–87, 300, 306, 358); *HS* 99C, pp. 4150f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 370f.). Futher information will be found in passages of *HS* 24 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 476f.); and in Nancy Lee Swann, *Food and money in ancient China* (Princeton, 1950). For comments on these changes, see Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 506f., "Wang Mang's economic reforms."

26 Hu Shih, "Wang Mang, the socialist emperor of nineteen centuries ago," *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 59 (1928), 218–30.

Pan Ku. He concluded that Wang Mang was no more than a clever intriguer who managed to antagonize all classes in turn and set loose the forces that ultimately cost him his life.[27] In Clyde B. Sargent's opinion, the Former Han dynasty had run its course, and China needed a Wang Mang. But by fearlessly pushing his ideas he embittered everyone, stimulated opposition, and brought on his ruin.[28] Except for Hu Shih's romantic and unhistorical interpretation, scholars have agreed on a generally negative attitude to Wang Mang, regarding him as a man who fell because of his own mistakes.

The flaw in this view is its myopia. Wang Mang's policies have been studied narrowly and in isolation, when it is easy to be influenced by historiography, by the hostility of Pan Ku to the usurper. To gain a better perspective, one must keep a certain distance and see Wang Mang's enactments against the broad vista of Former and Later Han policies. Only this will settle the question of whether these enactments were unusual or not.

Debasement of coinage was nothing new in Chinese history. Wu-ti had resorted to it from 119 B.C. onward, even introducing money made of leather, without ruining the country.[29] The basic ingredient in Wang Mang's monetary policies was progressively lighter weight for coins of higher denominations. This made it easier for the government to meet the demand for metal, and also facilitated the transportation of larger sums. Even if the new denominations encountered distrust, the effect must have been marginal. Peasants, who made up the vast majority of the population, used little or no money. Merchants and members of the gentry could make transactions in low denominations, whose monetary and metallic values were nearly identical, and they could protect their capital by investing it in land.

The prohibition against the private possession of gold was probably no more than an attempt to impoverish the Han nobility below the rank of king. As soon as the Han nobles had been dismissed in A.D. 10, gold was again permitted to circulate.

Wang Mang was not the first emperor to change the bureaucratic titles or the names of commanderies and counties. The Former Han had adopted a new official terminology in 144 B.C., when the government was reorganized after the uprising of the Seven Kingdoms. It changed the titles again in 104 B.C., when the calendar was adjusted and a new era was thought to begin.[30]

27 Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 98f. For Pan Ku's opinion, see *HS* 99C, p. 4194 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 470f.). 28 Sargent, *Wang Mang*.

29 See Chapter 10 below, pp. 587f., for the use of white deerskin and the changes introduced by Wang Mang.

30 Details of these changes are given in the individual entries for officials in *HS* 19A.

The prohibition against the buying and selling of private slaves affected a minuscule proportion of society. It could undoubtedly be circumvented, and it was in any event rescinded as early as A.D. 12.[31] Land reform had been warmly advocated for centuries.[32] Wang Mang's enactment was clearly a forerunner of the equal field system, which was later introduced by the Northern Wei in A.D. 485, and continued with some success by the T'ang dynasty until the eighth century. In spite of its good intentions, Wang Mang's land reform was not enforceable, and it also was rescinded in A.D. 12.

State monopolies on salt and iron had been established by Wu-ti around 119 B.C., followed by the monopoly on fermented liquor in 98.[33] The last-mentioned was abolished in 81 B.C., but the monopolies on salt and iron were maintained until the fall of the Former Han, except for the years 44 to 41 B.C. The Later Han dynasty resumed the monopolies on salt and iron. Casting of coins had become a government monopoly in 112 B.C., and it remained in force until the end of the Former Han. It was continued by the Later Han. The income from mountains and marshes was a personal monopoly of the emperor throughout the Former and Later Han and consisted of taxes paid into the imperial purse by fishermen, hunters and woodcutters. The price stabilization program, codified in 110 B.C., was kept up until the end of the Former Han and reestablished by the Later Han in A.D. 62. It follows that Wang Mang's monopolies were identical with those of the Former and Later Han dynasties, with the single exception that he reintroduced that on fermented liquor. The fact that all monopolies were recalled in A.D. 22 does not mean that they had failed, but that they were unenforceable during the civil war.[34]

Wu-ri had inrroduced a rax on merchanrs and artisans in 119 B.C., amounting to 9.5 percent and 4.75 percent of their respective capital. Although Wang Mang may have collected the tax from a somewhat wider category of professionals, it was based on income and therefore lighter than Wu-ti's tax on capital.

The practice of reducing official stipends in times of poor harvests antedates Wang Mang. Such an order is documented for 70 B.C., during the reign of the popular Hsüan-ti, and a similar procedure was followed by the Later Han. Wang Mang merely adopted a more systematic approach.[35]

The picture that emerges by this comparison is sharp and unmistakable.

31 *HS* 99B, p. 4130 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 324–25); Clarence Martin Wilbur, *Slavery in China during the Former Han Dynasty* (Chicago, 1943), p. 457.

32 For proposals to limit landholdings during the Former Han, see Chapter 10 below, pp. 556f.; and Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 267f. 33 See Chapter 10 below, pp. 602f.

34 *HS* 99C, pp. 4175f., 4179 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 428, 435).

35 For variations in stipends, see Hans Bielenstein, *The bureaucracy of Han times* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 125f.

Wang Mang was no innovator. Apart from the short-lived attempts at land reform and the restriction of slavery, his major policies were a direct continuation of Former Han practices. This means that the accusations of Pan Ku against Wang Mang lack substance. They were a device to misrepresent a man who, for political and philosophical reasons, had to be branded as incompetent and morally inferior.

Pan Ku's account of Wang Mang's policies toward non-Chinese peoples within and outside the borders is equally biased and in need of redressing. In A.D. 12, the aboriginal tribes of Tsang-ko commandery in what now is Kweichow killed the Chinese governor. Two years later, in A.D. 14, the aboriginal tribes rebelled in I-chou commandery (modern Yunnan).[36] Pan Ku insists that Wang Mang had brought the uprising on himself by demoting the aboriginal king to marquis, and that he was unable to cope with the emergency. In reality, the unrest in the southwest had begun with the Chinese conquest of that area.

Intending to establish a trade route to Burma, Wu-ti had incorporated the Kweichow region into the empire in 111 B.C., followed by Yunnan in 109 B.C. But the Chinese were not strong enough to destroy the tribal organizations, and were forced to recognize the local chiefs. The aboriginals rose in 105 B.C., from 84 to 82 B.C., and in 27 B.C. Clearly the trouble in A.D. 12 and the uprising of A.D. 14 were part of a pattern, and not simply a response to demented policies of Wang Mang. What is more, he dealt successfully with the A.D. 14 uprising. While the *Han shu* ignores this fact, the section on the "southwestern barbarians" in the *Hou-Han shu* records that Wang Mang appointed a new governor of I-chou commandery who gradually pacified the territory.[37]

To the north, China bordered on the great Hsiung-nu empire, a tribal federation which ruled what is now Outer and Inner Mongolia. Until 51 B.C., relations between the Chinese and Hsiung-nu had usually been hostile, but during that year peace was concluded. The Hu-han-yeh *shan-yü*, who was one of two rival Hsiung-nu rulers, took the unprecedented step of visiting Ch'ang-an in person, on which occasion the Chinese ruler wisely treated him as an equal.[38] He paid further visits in 49 and 33 B.C., and his successors came to the Chinese court in 25 and 1 B.C. Wang Mang is accused of having disrupted these friendly relations.

All events from 51 B.C. onward are disguised in the ancient records as a submission of the Hsiung-nu, and this view has been echoed by modern

36 *HS* 99B, pp. 4139, 4230 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 325, 348).

37 *Hou-Han shu* 86, p. 2846; and see Chapter 6 below, p. 196.

38 See Chapter 6 below pp. 395f.; and Chapter 2 above, pp. 459–60. The reading Hu-han-hsieh is sometimes preferred to Hu-han-yeh.

scholars. Pan Ku could not bring himself to admit equality between the Chinese emperor and an alien ruler. He was trapped by his own stereotyped vocabulary and his conviction that China's cultural superiority meant moral supremacy over mankind, with the Son of Heaven at the summit. This made it impossible for him to describe the visits of foreign rulers as other than the homage of subjects to their overlord. It is true that the Chinese emperors did not return the visits, that the Hsiung-nu sent hostages and the Chinese did not.[39] But if emotion and historiographical technique are discounted, it is evident that the Chinese had no hold over the Hsiung-nu. It suited the Hsiung-nu that there should be a period of peace and recovery. They ceased their raids for the time being and called their action "protecting the Chinese border." They accepted vast amounts of gifts from the Chinese emperor, and they could resume the war at any time they wished.[40] The Chinese, on their part, realized that a military solution was costly and perhaps impossible, and that expediency was the better policy.

On his last visit to the Chinese court in 33 B.C., the Hu-han-yeh *shan-yü* was presented with five women from the imperial harem. One of these was Wang Chao-chün, who became a favorite of the Hsiung-nu ruler and gave birth to two sons.[41] Only one of these seems to have survived, I-t'u-chih-ya-shih. When the Hu-han-yeh *shan-yü* died in 31 B.C., Wang Chao-chün, with Chinese imperial permission, followed the custom of the Hsiung-nu and became a wife of the next *shan-yü*. In her new marriage she had two daughters, one of whom was Yün.

Wang Mang brought Yün to China in A.D. 2, and placed her in the entourage of the grand empress dowager Wang. She returned north a confirmed partisan of China. Her husband, a prominent Hsiung-nu noble, also advocated closer relations with China. In short, a pro-Chinese party had come into existence among the Hsiung-nu, in which Yün, her husband, and presumably also her half-brother I-t'u-chih-ya-shih, were active. It stands to reason that conservative elements among the Hsiung-nu viewed the machinations of the peace party with grave suspicion, and attempted to counteract its influence by precipitating a break with China. The ruling *shan-yü* happened to be a conservative. This was the situation faced by Wang Mang when he ascended the throne in A.D. 9.[42]

39 For the view that matrimonial alliances, whereby Chinese princesses were sent as brides to leaders of foreign communities, in effect constituted a system of hostages, see A. F. P. Hulsewé, *China in Central Asia: The early stage 125 B.C.–A.D. 23, with an introduction by M. A. N. Loewe* (Leiden, 1979), pp. 60f.

40 For the scale of payments made by the Chinese to the Hsiung-nu, see Ying-shih Yü, *Trade and expansion in Han China: A study in the structure of Sino-barbarian economic relations* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), pp. 46f.; and Chapter 6 below, pp. 396f.

41 *HS* 94B, pp. 3806f.

42 For Wang Mang's relations with the Hsiung-nu, see *HS* 94B, pp. 3820f.

Pan Ku claims that the Hsiung-nu resumed the war in A.D. 9 because Wang Mang "demoted" the *shan-yü* to a lesser rank. The "demotion" was an unnecessary discourtesy, although it undoubtedly had warm support from the Confucianists. With few exceptions, the Chinese were notorious in their attitude to foreigners. Ai-ti had treated the same *shan-yü* with egregious tactlessness in 1 B.C., and the founder of the Later Han behaved with even greater rudeness to the influential king of Yarkand (So-chü) in A.D. 41.[43] Wang Mang simply acted in traditional fashion. But he had no jurisdiction over the Hsiung-nu, and could not demote their ruler at will. The affair cannot have been a real cause for war; at best, it was a pretext for the conservatives.

Wang Mang dealt with the new belligerence of the Hsiung-nu intelligently and efficiently, combining firmness and diplomacy. In the winter of A.D. 10 to 11, he ordered the mobilization of 300,000 men. This mobilization, which supposedly brought hardship to the border country, has been condemned as a grandiose and futile undertaking. A closer reading of the texts brings out that Wang Mang acted with dispatch and competence.[44] The 300,000 men were not assembled in one locality alone, but at twelve places along the entire northern frontier. The disruptive effect on the border population was therefore held to a minimum. In contrast, Wu-ti in 133 B.C. had assembled 300,000 men in a single area, without becoming the victim of Pan Ku's scorn. Wang Mang's show of force sufficed to put teeth into his foreign policy, and the armies never had to set out. This is proved by the fact that the Hsiung-nu ventured no major attacks on China.

On the diplomatic front, Wang Mang tried to bolster the peace party among the Hsiung-nu. Ever since the death of the Hu-han-yeh *shan-yü*, inheritance of the throne had been by generation and seniority. In each generation, all sons of a former *shan-yü* were heirs in succession, proceeding from elder to younger brother or cousin. At the time of the renewed war, the heir apparent was Hsien, a younger half-brother of the reigning *shan-yü* and a member of the pro-Chinese party. With financial support from Wang Mang, Hsien was in A.D. 11 proclaimed counter *shan-yü*, which, as intended, increased dissension among the Hsiung-nu. Although Hsien had to surrender to his half-brother, he was strong enough not only to escape punishment, but also to remain heir to the throne.[45]

When the Hsiung-nu raids, minor though they were, continued, Wang

43 For the incident of 1 B.C., see *HS* 11, p. 344 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 37); *HS* 94B, p. 3817. For the incident of A.D. 41, see *HHS* 88, pp. 2923f.

44 *HS* 99B, p. 4121 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 304f.); *HS* 94B, p. 3824.

45 *HS* 99B, p. 4126 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 316).

Mang ordered in A.D. 12 the execution of a Hsiung-nu prince who was in Ch'ang-an as a hostage.[46] Wang Mang has been blamed for this, although legally he was within his rights. The institution of hostages was based on the principle of retaliation, and the founder of the Later Han did not hesitate to execute a prominent hostage in A.D. 32.

Hsien ascended the Hsiung-nu throne in A.D. 13, and with him the peace party came to power. After his death in A.D. 18[47] the situation changed again, since his brother and successor was a conservative. At that time, I-t'u-chih-ya-shih was the only remaining heir to the throne in his generation, and it is a significant sign of the tension between the conservatives and the pro-Chinese party that the new *shan-yü* had him murdered. But, apart from a raid in A.D. 19, the war was not resumed. The Chinese border fortifications were intact, and Wang Mang's forces were able to withstand Hsiung-nu pressure. In addition, Wang Mang once more turned to diplomacy. Yün had come to Ch'ang-an with her family, presumably because they feared for their lives, and Wang Mang had enthroned her husband as counter *shan-yü*. The latter's death soon thereafter was unfortunate for China, and Wang Mang's reign ended in a stalemate between him and the Hsiung-nu. Yün never returned to the north; she remained at the Chinese court and perished there together with Wang Mang in A.D. 23.

Wang Mang handled problems arising in Central Asia with equal acumen. In A.D. 13 Karashahr (Yen-ch'i) rose and killed the Chinese protector-general of the Western Regions, a territory which in the narrow sense comprised the Tarim Basin and the Turfan Oasis. A Chinese expeditionary force in A.D. 16 was ambushed but not fully annihilated. It attacked Karashahr and massacred part of its population before returning to China. Pan Ku claims that henceforth the Western Regions were cut off.[48] This is not correct. He contradicts himself elsewhere in his history and states that the new protector-general of the Western Regions maintained himself in the Tarim Basin. Karashahr had been chastised, and none of the other towns on the northern silk route broke away from China. The Western Regions were lost only during the civil war after Wang Mang's death, a fact which for historiographical reasons was projected back by Pan Ku into the reign of the "usurper."[49]

Wang Mang was also successful in his relations with the Tibetans and Koreans. In the west, he extended Chinese territory toward Kokonor

46 *HS* 99B, p. 4128 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 319). 47 *HS* 94B, p. 3828.

48 *HS* 99B, pp. 4133, 4146 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 333, 366). For Karashahr, see Hulsewé *CICA*, p. 177 note 588.

49 For Li Ch'ung, protector-general from A.D. 16 to 23, see *HS* 96B, p. 3927 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 196).

(Ch'ing-hai). In the east, he defeated the state of Koguryŏ (Kao-kou-li) with ease in A.D. 12.[50] Pan Ku's innuendos notwithstanding, Wang Mang showed impressive mastery in his policies toward all non-Chinese peoples.

To summarize, Wang Mang was not the inept, devious, hypocritical, and megalomaniac bungler depicted by Pan Ku. These accusations are stereotyped and unjust. On the positive side, Wang Mang was resourceful and able. Influenced no doubt by his own experience, he did not delegate imperial authority, and carefully watched the performance of his officials. He was strict to the point of forcing three of his sons, one grandson, and one nephew to commit suicide for infringements of the law. This contrasts favorably with the laxness of the Han emperors toward their relatives. He had a wide-ranging curiosity. His conference on classical texts, philology, and other subjects in A.D. 5 may well have ranked in importance with the discussions in the Pavilion of the Stone Canal in 51 B.C., or those in the White Tiger Hall from A.D. 79 to 80.[51] In A.D. 16, Wang Mang ordered that an executed man be dissected by the grand physician (*t'ai-i*) in order to examine his viscera and arteries and find cures for illness. In A.D. 19, Wang Mang summoned men of extraordinary skills suitable for warfare. One of them had constructed two wings and flew for several hundred double paces before falling. Presumably he began the flight from one of the towers in the imperial grounds which rose to a height of over a hundred meters. On the negative side, Wang Mang was something of a Confucian pedant who relied overly much on the classics of the Old Text School.[52] He disliked criticism, and, like all emperors of the time, was superstitious.

Wang Mang cannot easily be labeled. In his sponsorship of the Old Text School, and in his attitude to slavery and land reform, he was a reformist. In his reliance on state monopolies, price stabilization, and law enforcement, he was a modernist. Wang Mang was no revolutionary dreamer, but a pragmatist who governed China very much as the Han emperors had done before him.

If there existed any discontent felt by the gentry against Wang Mang, it took no overt form. From A.D. 10 to 20, there was to Pan Ku's knowledge not even a single plot against him. No attempt was made to assassinate the man, while even Wu-ti had been almost murdered in 88 B.C.[53] All evi-

50 *HS* 99B, p. 4130 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 325f.).

51 For these conferences, see Chapter 2 above, p. 192, and 14 below, pp. 757, 763f.

52 For these experiments, see *HS* 99B, p. 4145 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 365); *HS* 99C, p. 4155 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 382). For the attempts at flight, see Joseph Needham, *Science and civilisation in China* (Cambridge, 1954–), Vol. IV, Part 2, pp. 587–88. For the Old Text School, see Tjan Tjoe Som, *Po hu t'ung*: *The comprehensive discussions in the White Tiger Hall* (Leiden, 1949, 1952), Vol. I, pp. 137f.; and Chapter 14 below, pp. 754f.

53 *HS* 6, p. 211 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 118); Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, p. 48.

dence indicates that the officials supported Wang Mang practically *en masse*, and that his support faded only when widespread peasant unrest led to crushing defeats of government armies. If Wang Mang had been responsible for this unrest, it would be a fatal indictment of his reign. But he was not. Wang Mang fell because of the vast cumulative effects of changes in the course of the Yellow River, a catastrophe which no power on earth could have prevented.[54]

THE RESTORATION OF THE HAN DYNASTY

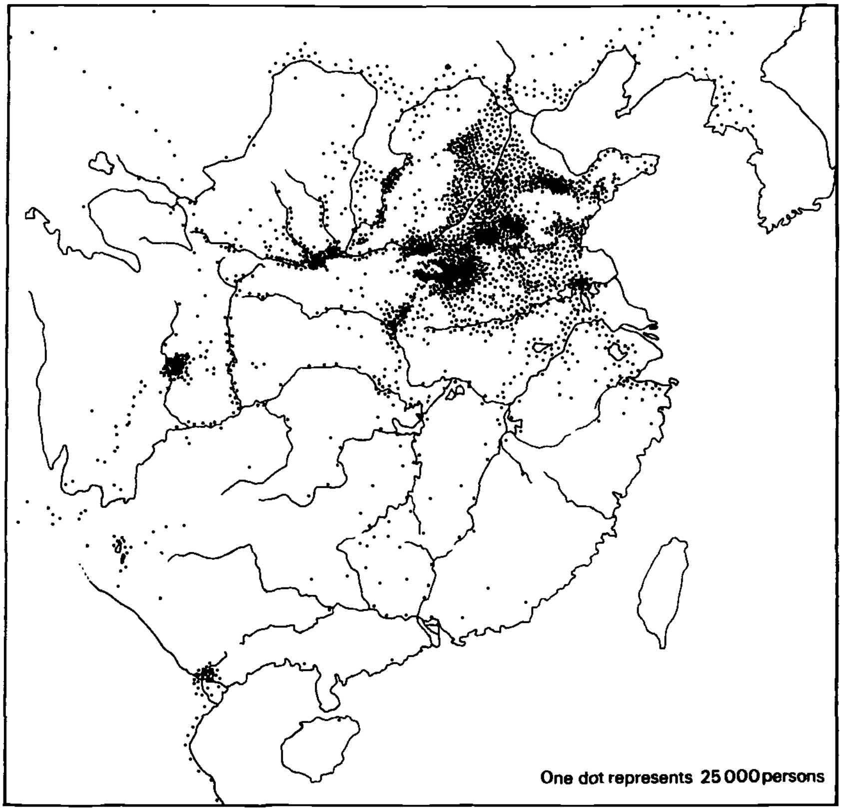
The earliest preserved census in the world was taken in the eighth month (September/October) of A.D. 2.[55] The treatise on administrative geography in the *Han shu* lists from that survey the number of households and individuals in each commandery and kingdom, and then records the names of all counties belonging to the unit. Since the locations and dimensions of Han counties are known with few exceptions, it is possible to draw a dot map showing with considerable accuracy where people lived. The second preserved census, taken in A.D. 140, is found in the corresponding treatise of the *Hou-Han shu*, and again a map can be drawn. A comparison of the two maps yields significant results. In A.D. 2, the population of China numbered 57.7 million individuals, while only 48 million are recorded for A.D. 140. Returns from three commanderies are missing in the latter survey, so that the national total was slightly above 48 million. It follows that between the years A.D. 2 and 140, the population of China had decreased by 8 or 9 million inhabitants.

Furthermore, large shifts in the regional distribution of population had occurred during the intervening years. In A.D. 2, 44 million people were living in northern China (defined as China north of the Ch'in-ling Mountains, Huai Mountains, and Yangtze estuary), as against 13.7 million in southern China, a ratio of 7.6 to 2.4. For A.D. 140, the corresponding figures are 26 as against 22 million, or a ratio of 5.4 to 4.6. Northern China had lost, while southern China had gained. In the northwest, the decrease amounted to 6.5 million people. In the northeast, 11.5 million inhabitants had disappeared, mainly on the Great Plain south of the old course of the Yellow River. These losses were to a considerable extent offset by gains in southern China, especially in Hunan, Kiangsi, and Kwangtung, where the population had quadrupled.

Such an increase is too large to be explained by a sudden jump in the

54 See Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. I, pp. 145f.

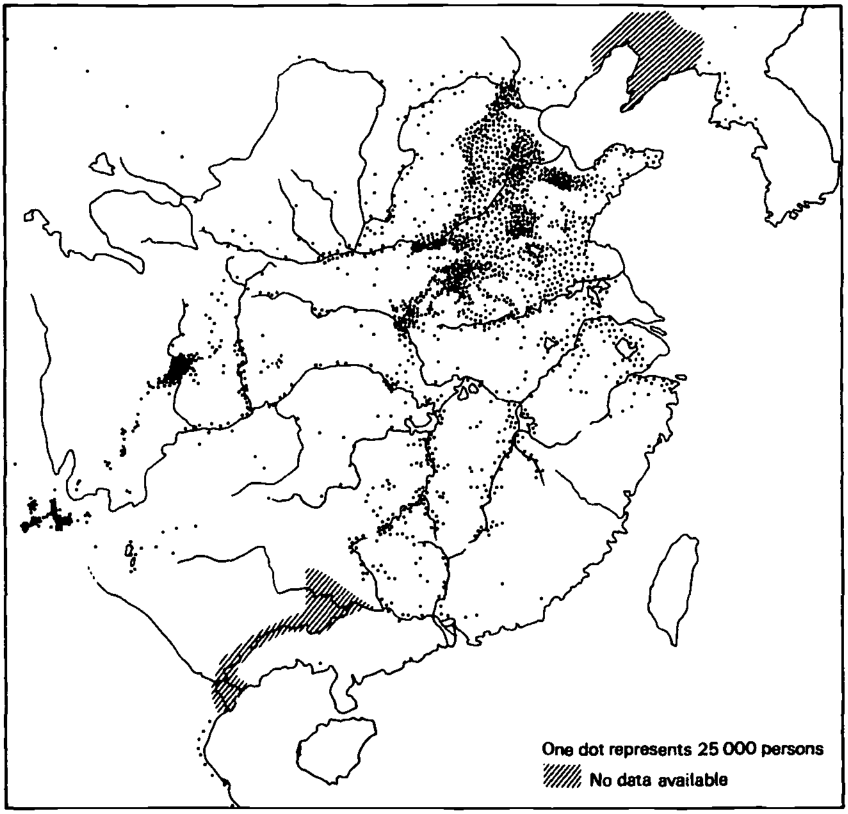
55 See Hans Bielenstein, "The census of China during the period 2–742 A.D.," *BMFEA*, 19 (1947), 125–63.



Map 10. The population of China, A.D. 2
After H. Bielenstein. *BMFEA* 19 (1947).

birth rate. The conclusion is inescapable that a vast voluntary migration from north to south had taken place. The depopulation of the northwest began after the fall of Wang Mang; it was due to pressure from the Hsiung-nu and Tibetans, and it will be discussed later. The migration from the Great Plain was set into motion by two changes in the course of the Yellow River.

The Yellow River, which so far had followed a single northward course, entering the sea at the present Tientsin, broke its dikes in the reign of P'ing-ti and flooded the southern part of the Great Plain. It divided into two branches, keeping the old northern course and in addition throwing a new and mighty arm southeastward into the Huai River. This disaster had not yet happened when the census was taken in the eighth month of A.D. 2. Since rivers do not normally flood in the winter, it stands to reason that the event should be dated A.D. 3, 4, or 5. A second calamity followed in



Map 11. The population of China, A.D. 140
After H. Bielenstein. *BMFEA* 19 (1947).

A.D. 11, when the Yellow River permanently abandoned the old northern bed and shifted this branch to its present course, with the mouth just north of the Shantung peninsula.[56]

To avert these two catastrophes would have been utterly impossible. The Yellow River carries large amounts of silt, the yellow loess which has given the river its name. In the northwest the current is swift, and the silt is swept along. But once the river has entered the Great Plain the current becomes sluggish, the silt sinks to the bottom, and over the centuries the river bed will gradually rise above the surrounding countryside. The central government lacked the resources for such vast engineering ventures as the construction and maintenance of adequate dikes. Routine hydraulic work was done locally, and dikes were built when and where conditions demanded. They formed, at best, a patchwork.

56 *HS* 99B, p. 4127 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 318).

Even with national planning the Yellow River could not have been permanently contained; and once the inevitable disaster occurred, it required an immense effort by the government to mobilize technicians and a labor force for the repairs.[57] Even the energetic Wu-ti could not close a minor break of 132 B.C. until 109 B.C. The new southern branch of the Yellow River was not cut off until A.D. 70, a feat which was celebrated by an edict on 8 April of that year.[58] The Yellow River shifted to its southern course once more in 1194, swinging back to the north in 1853. At that time too, the governments were powerless in the face of this natural force, even though their resources were immensely greater than Wang Mang's. Wang Mang must therefore be absolved from any blame in having brought upon himself the misfortune which led to civil war and his own death.

Many must have been killed outright by the two floods, and survivors fled from the stricken areas. Supplies were not sufficient to feed the refugees in adjacent territories. Famine spread, and more and more people fell victim to the cumulative effects of the changes in the course of the river. Gradually peasants began to abandon the southern part of the Great Plain and embarked on a slow migration southward. Unrest sprang up along the migration routes, where starving peasants banded together to take food by force.

The situation was even more desperate in Shantung. The peninsula had suffered the same overcrowding through refugees and ensuing famine, but shackled between the two new branches of the Yellow River, offered no easy avenue of escape. The peasant bands grew and eventually merged into a large, poorly organized, but nearly invincible army, which made its way through Shantung looting, killing, and kidnapping. When local administrators were unable to cope with the emergency, Wang Mang ordered the mobilization of troops in A.D. 18. These met with no success. In A.D. 22, Wang Mang dispatched a large army which entered Shantung in the winter, the season when the waters of the Yellow River were low. A battle was fought in which the imperial forces were defeated and the commanding general was killed.[59]

The peasants had painted their foreheads red in order to distinguish themselves from the government troops, and henceforth were known as the Red Eyebrows. Red was the color of the Former Han, so that the peasants

57 For the problems of flood control, with particular reference to the Yellow River, and attempts to repair, or even forestall, damage, see *Shih-chi* 29 (Édouard Chavannes, *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-Ma Ts'ien* [Paris, 1895–1905; rpt. Paris, 1969], Vol. II, pp. 520–37); *HS* 29; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 154f., 190f. 58 *HHS* 2, p. 116; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. I, p. 147.

59 *HS* 99C, pp. 4154, 4177 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 379, 432); Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. I, p. 152.

in a vague kind of way may have thought of themselves as champions of the fallen dynasty. But they were simple and ignorant people who could not read or write. They did not create military units, had no banners, and used no special words of command. Maintenance of discipline was uncomplicated and efficient. Whoever killed another was executed, whoever wounded another had to pay compensation. The leaders used for themselves the titles of lowly local officials, the only ones with which they would have been acquainted. Few members of the gentry were among the Red Eyebrows, and they had no real influence; power rested with the peasants themselves. There is no evidence that the Red Eyebrows were a secret society or a religious movement. The common denominator that had brought them together was starvation, and the immediate objective that held them together in their wanderings was the urge to fill their bellies.

In time the Red Eyebrows had grown so numerous that it had become inconvenient for them to operate as a single unit. Wang Mang's army had been defeated by one detachment, while another was meanwhile besieging a county town. A third seems already to have evacuated Shantung, where pickings had become slim. This contingent, later followed by the others, was moving slowly in the direction of the wealthy commandery of Nan-yang, the territory from which the Han dynasty was to be restored.

Nan-yang (in southern Honan) comprised a rich agricultural basin, situated between the foothills of the Ch'in-ling and the Huai Mountains, which drained southward to the Han River. It was the home of some twenty locally prominent gentry clans, and of several large clusters of the immense Liu clan descending from Ching-ti (r. 156–141 B.C.).[60] One of the routes of migration from the stricken Great Plain passed through this commandery. The gentry clans had survived these troubled times by taking refuge in walled camps and defending themselves with the help of followers. In early A.D. 22, the situation in Nan-yang itself was relatively stable, but bands of armed and victorious peasants operated to the south of it. These were the so-called troops from Hsin-shih, which had received their name from a district or hamlet close to the lower course of the Han River, and the troops of the Lower Yangtze. Each of these bands was led by several chieftains, mostly uneducated commoners, with a sprinkling of members of the gentry.[61]

In the summer of A.D. 22, the troops from Hsin-shih turned north and crossed the border into Nan-yang. Local peasant leaders in the southern part of the commandery responded by assembling a band of their own which they called the troops from P'ing-lin. Among them was a member of

60 Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. I, pp. 92f. 61 *HHS* 1A, pp. 2f.

the Liu family in Nan-yang, Liu Hsüan, who had been forced to avoid the authorities because of a blood feud.

Nan-yang was the very commandery where in A.D. 6 an uprising of the imperial house against Wang Mang had failed because popular support had been lacking. But circumstances were different now. In A.D. 22 the troops from Hsin-shih were entering Nan-yang from the south, welcomed by local commoners, while the so far invincible Red Eyebrows were approaching from the east. Although neither had political programs or were even hostile to the traditional kind of government, they posed a mortal danger to the landowners simply because they were numerous and hungry. Emotions and fears must have run high among the gentry of Nan-yang, and for the first time conditions were ripe for a successful rebellion. If members of the former imperial house in Nan-yang, allied with local gentry clans, were able to channel the popular unrest against Wang Mang, they would not only save their own lives, but perhaps also restore the fallen dynasty.

The undisputed leader of the activists in Nan-yang was Liu Yen, who in the texts is always referred to by his courtesy name as Liu Po-sheng.[62] He descended in the sixth generation from Ching-ti, which made him a descendant in the eighth generation of Kao-ti, founder of the Former Han. Po-sheng's connection with the imperial house was remote, neither his father, grandfather or great-grandfather having been a marquis, and the entire branch undoubtedly was no longer carried on the imperial register. His father had reached the relatively lowly rank of county magistrate. His mother came from a wealthy landed clan in Nan-yang. He had three sisters, and two younger brothers named Chung and Hsiu. It was Liu Hsiu, born on 13 January 5 B.C., who was destined to found the Later Han dynasty, although at first he was completely overshadowed by his eldest brother.

Reacting to the same pressures in Nan-yang, the influential Li clan was also planning an uprising. Burying an old grudge, it agreed to cooperate with Liu Po-sheng.[63] Other clans joined, but many preferred to await developments. Po-sheng faced opposition even among his closest relatives.

The rebels rose in October or November A.D. 22 at various places in the countryside, and then rapidly joined forces. Liu Po-sheng negotiated an alliance with the troops from Hsin-shih and the troops from P'ing-lin, as he must have planned from the beginning, and subsequently received reinforcements from several gentry clans in Nan-yang.[64] Marching north through the commandery, he met with initial success but then suffered a

62 For Liu Po-sheng's biography, see *HHS* 14, pp. 549–55.

63 For the Li clan of Wan, see Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. I, pp. 94, 102.

64 For further details of these events, see Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. I, pp. 104–13.

disastrous defeat at the hands of Wang Mang's local forces at Hsiao-ch'ang-an. Po-sheng's brother Chung was killed in the battle, and he also lost a sister and other close relatives. The local officials, who so far had hesitated to commit themselves, assumed that the uprising was crushed and began to round up and execute the relatives of the rebels.

Liu Po-sheng saved the day; he personally met the leaders of the troops of the Lower Yangtze, who had meanwhile also entered Nan-yang commandery, and persuaded them to join his cause. This more than made up for the losses, but also increased the number of chieftains in the leadership of the rebellion and tipped the balance against the Nan-yang gentry. Moreover, although Po-sheng seems to have been in general command, the chieftains of the peasants retained control over their bands, which operated under their old names. With these reorganized and augmented forces, Liu Po-sheng fought a new battle against Wang Mang's troops in January or February A.D. 23, won a complete victory, and killed the two commanders. Shortly thereafter he overwhelmed another enemy army. The greater part of Nan-yang was now in Po-sheng's hands, and he proceeded to lay siege to its capital, the important city of Wan. Messengers fanned out to other parts of the empire, openly declaring that Wang Mang should be overthrown and enumerating his "crimes."

This was the moment when it was opportune to legalize the rebellion by proclaiming an emperor, but the various leaders were agreed on one point only: the Han dynasty should be restored by enthroning a member of the Liu clan. The obvious candidate of the Nan-yang gentry was Liu Po-sheng. The chieftains suspected, probably with good reason, that his elevation would rob them of their influence. It was to their advantage to sponsor a candidate of their own, and it so happened that one was in their midst. Liu Hsüan, a lesser leader of the troops from P'ing-lin, was Liu Po-sheng's third cousin, and like him a descendant in the sixth generation of Ching-ti. If he were enthroned, the chieftains expected to dominate him. Without informing the Nan-yang gentry, the chieftains of the troops from Hsin-shih, the troops from P'ing-lin, and the troops of the Lower Yangtze assembled and decided to proclaim Liu Hsüan emperor. They then invited Liu Po-sheng to join the meeting. Whatever he argued on that occasion was unsuccessful. On 11 March A.D. 23, Liu Hsüan ascended the throne.[65] The very forces whose support had made Po-sheng victorious also lost him an empire.

Liu Hsüan was the first emperor of the Later Han, but not the founder of

65 *HS* 99C, p. 4180 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 437); *HHS* 1A, p. 4; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. I, p. 115.

the dynasty. He was not even granted a posthumous name, and is known in history as the Keng-shih emperor, the "emperor of a new beginning." He therefore suffered the same historiographical fate as Wang Mang. Pan Ku, trying to authenticate why the Keng-shih emperor was unworthy of the Mandate of Heaven, depicted him as a witless drunkard. This is grossly unfair, even though events were to show that Liu Hsüan was not a competent ruler.

For the time being, the chieftains did well for themselves in the new government and dominated the highest offices in the ratio of about two to one. Liu Po-sheng could not be entirely ignored, and was given the important post of minister of finance (*ta-ssu-t'u*). But the Nan-yang gentry bowed to political reality, and Po-sheng found himself gradually deserted by his former supporters. The movement consolidated around the new emperor, and with it the old names of the peasant armies disappeared. In the new Army of Han, chieftains and gentry temporarily fought side by side. The siege of Wan continued, and the war was also carried into adjoining territories. In April or May of A.D. 23, an expeditionary force entered Ying-ch'uan commandery, which bordered on Nan-yang in the northeast. With it went Po-sheng's only surviving brother, Liu Hsiu, who, in spite of having been granted the ministerial rank of superintendent of ceremonial, continued to serve in the field as a lowly lieutenant general.[66]

Wang Mang had meanwhile ordered the mobilization of a great army. After this had been assembled at Lo-yang, it entered Ying-ch'uan commandery from the north, forced the Han troops back on K'un-yang, and laid siege to this city. Liu Hsiu and others managed to escape by night and hurriedly raised soldiers in neighboring counties. They returned on 7 July. Leading the vanguard, Liu Hsiu attacked the enemy while the Han troops within the city made a sally. Mauled from both sides, Wang Mang's army was utterly defeated. This was the most decisive engagement of the civil war. The Han troops triumphed over a superior army, and Liu Hsiu for the first time showed his military talents. Wan had fallen three days earlier, and the Keng-shih emperor had entered the city. Soon thereafter, the career of Liu Po-sheng came to an end. Although he had become politically dispensable, he remained a danger to the Keng-shih emperor and his supporters. Trumped-up charges were preferred against him by a chieftain and a leader of the Nan-yang gentry, whereupon he was executed immediately.[67]

Wang Mang never recovered from the defeat at K'un-yang. Disintegration spread throughout the empire. Even high officials in Ch'ang-an plot-

66 *HHS* 1A, p. 4.
67 *HS* 99C, pp. 4181f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 440f.); *HHS* 1A, p. 8; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. I, pp. 117f.

ted against their ruler, among them the famous Liu Hsin who had long been a partisan of Wang Mang. The plan was discovered, and the conspirators were executed or committed suicide. Local administrators began to shift their allegiance to the Keng-shih emperor. Secondary rebellions broke out in the northwest, Szechwan, the lower Han River valley, along the Lower Yangtze, and on the northern part of the Great Plain.[68]

Han armies now marched on Ch'ang-an, and Wang Mang's last defenses crumbled. Great clans in the counties surrounding the capital, attracted by the opportunity for magnificent loot, led their followers and closed in on the doomed city. On 4 October, these motley crowds broke through the northernmost gate on Ch'ang-an's east wall, and after hours of fighting reached the Wei-yang Palace. On the following day, 5 October, people within the city joined the rebels, burned down a side gate, and forced their way into the palace. Fighting continued throughout the day, the fire spreading to the quarters of the imperial harem. At dawn on 6 October, the exhausted and half-conscious Wang Mang was taken to the Chien T'ai (Terrace Bathed by Water), where his supporters made their last stand. They were overrun and killed in the late afternoon. Wang Mang's head was cut off and sent to Wan. All this had happened before the arrival of the regular Han army on 9 October. Shortly thereafter, Lo-yang fell to the Han forces. This was the second largest city of the empire; it had a glorious name, and the Keng-shih emperor decided to make it his capital.[69]

The year A.D. 23 ended with the Keng-shih emperor the apparent victor. Wang Mang was dead, and his highest officials, all compromised in the eyes of the restored Han, had fallen in battle, had killed themselves, or had been executed. The other officials did not find it difficult to change party. They were freely accepted, since the supply of educated men needed to govern the empire was limited. The Keng-shih emperor controlled some of the richest agricultural areas in the nation, with about 40 percent of the total population. But he had also committed two of the four major errors which were to cost him his throne.

In November, he had sent Liu Hsiu, brother of the executed Liu Po-sheng, on an independent mission to the northern part of the Great Plain. This released him from the emperor's direct control and enabled him to strike out on his own. Second, the Keng-shih emperor had failed to reach an accommodation with the Red Eyebrows. Having approached Nan-yang in the wake of detachments which had actually entered the commandery,

68 *HS* 99C, pp. 4184f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 446f.); Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. I, pp. 121f. For Liu Hsin's importance in China's literary history, see P. van der Loon, "On the transmission of Kuan-tzu," *TP*, 41:4–5 (1952), 358f.; and Chapter 14 below, pp. 761f.

69 *HS* 99C, pp. 4189f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 460f.); Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. I, pp. 128f.

the main bulk of the Red Eyebrows had suddenly swerved north and at the end of A.D. 23 were at a standstill just south of the Yellow River east of Lo-yang. Their leaders came to the new capital, and no effort should have been spared to attach them permanently to the restored Han. When they were merely made marquises and otherwise ignored, they broke with the Keng-shih emperor and returned to their forces.

The next year, A.D. 24, is the year when ultimate defeat of the Keng-shih emperor became certain.[70] It began with the extremely unwise decision to move the capital to Ch'ang-an. Although the Wei-yang Palace had been sacked and burned, the remainder of the city was intact, and it had lost nothing of its old prestige. Ch'ang-an was located in the so-called Land within the Passes (Kuan-chung), a plateau which was easily defended against all but major attacks. But once enemy armies had broken through the passes, it became a trap. This had happened to Wang Mang, and was again to be the fate of the Keng-shih emperor. The chieftains realized the military dangers and opposed the move. The Nan-yang gentry advocated it, with an ulterior motive in mind. In Ch'ang-an, with its overwhelming past, it would be possible to isolate the emperor from the chieftains and to increase the influence of the gentry faction.

Overriding the opposition, the Keng-shih emperor committed his third major error, departed from Lo-yang, and arrived in Ch'ang-an during March of 24. He soon made his fourth and last great mistake by allowing the Nan-yang gentry to follow up its advantage. Under the pretext of reorganizing the central government, the leading chieftains were stripped of much of their power and then sent away from the capital. They still commanded imperial armies, but had lost the ear of the emperor. Tensions developed simultaneously among the members of the Nan-yang gentry. These shortsighted and self-serving political maneuvers embittered the chieftains and made the emperor the victim of a single faction in power. He had lost the chance of controlling events by having two rival factions at the court which were nonetheless united in their ambition to complete the conquest of China.[71]

It soon became apparent that the Keng-shih emperor no longer had the political and military initiative. Fertile and populous areas on the Great Plain, which had been gained in the last year, were slipping away from his control. At best, the emperor was recognized by 25 percent of the total population. In fact, he was restricted to the lower Wei River valley, whose

70 For the decline of the Keng-shih emperor's power, see Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. II, *BMFEA* 31 (1959), 49f. For the initial establishment of the capital at Lo-yang, see *HHS* 11, p. 470; *HHS* 16, p. 599; *HHS* (tr.) 10, p. 3218. For the move to Ch'ang-an, see *HS* 99C, p. 4193 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 469). 71 Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. II, pp. 51–56.

agricultural production was insufficient for the upkeep of the court and central bureaucracy. Liu Hsiu had assembled an army, was master of the rich northern part of the Great Plain with about 13 percent of the total population, and had broken with the Keng-shih emperor. The Red Eyebrows were on the march. Divided into three units, they ascended to Kuan-chung along different routes.[72]

In February to March A.D. 25, the Red Eyebrows reunited their forces on the plateau. They then continued their slow march toward the capital, defeating imperial troops in their way. It was at this time that their leaders, influenced by a handful of gentry representatives among them, decided to set up an emperor of their own and thereby to legitimize themselves. They had earlier in Shantung kidnapped three brothers of the imperial house who were descended from Kao-ti. Liu P'en-tzu, who was the youngest (born A.D. 11), was chosen by lot and enthroned in July or August. But nothing changed in practice. The Red Eyebrows were quite incapable of setting up a government, and most of their ministers were illiterate.[73]

Defense of Ch'ang-an would have been difficult against the Red Eyebrows alone. It was impossible against two enemy forces, since an army dispatched by Liu Hsiu had approached from a different direction. In addition, the antagonism between the chieftains and the Nan-yang gentry finally broke out into open fighting. The former had fallen back on Ch'ang-an with the remnants of their troops. The result was a hand-to-hand battle within the palace, whereafter the chieftains went on a rampage through Ch'ang-an that lasted for over a month. The confrontation ended with the flight of the chieftains, who then joined the Red Eyebrows.[74]

In October, the Red Eyebrows entered the capital. The Keng-shih emperor escaped on horseback, but was arrested by one of his former officials and brought back to Ch'ang-an in November or December. He abdicated by surrendering the imperial seals to Liu P'en-tzu, and was granted the title of king. The former emperor was ordered to herd horses in the open country, and there was strangled at the instigation of his implacable enemies, the surviving former chieftains. The Red Eyebrows remained in Ch'ang-an, sacking the city and terrorizing the people.

The restoration of the Han dynasty through the Keng-shih emperor had failed, but before the fall of Ch'ang-an the real founder had proclaimed

72 Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. II, p. 89, Map 9.

73 For the activities of the Red Eyebrows at this juncture, see Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. II, pp. 91f. For the enthronement of Liu P'en-tzu, see *HHS* 1A, p. 23; *HHS* 11, p. 480; *HHS* (tr.) 10, p. 3219; *HHS* (tr.) 13, p. 3268.

74 For the fighting and destruction in Ch'ang-an, and the surrender and death of the Keng-shih emperor, see *HHS* 1A, p. 24; *HHS* 11, pp. 481f.; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. II, pp. 98f.

himself Son of Heaven. This was Liu Hsiu, who had ascended the throne north of Yellow River on 5 August A.D. 25.

THE LATER HAN DYNASTY

The Later Han dynasty lasted from 5 August A.D. 25, when Liu Hsiu ascended the throne, until 25 November A.D. 220, when Hsien-ti abdicated to the founder of the Wei dynasty. Liu Hsiu is known in history by his posthumous name as Kuang-wu-ti, or by his temple name, Shih-tsu. As the successful first ruler of a dynasty, he was believed to possess the Mandate of Heaven, and his treatment in historiography was therefore the opposite to that of Wang Mang and the Keng-shih emperor. He was overdrawn by Pan Ku as a man of exceptional stature. It is true that Kuang-wu-ti had great military skill and the talent to attract capable men to his cause. And he did not spare himself. He was a ruler in fact as well as in name, a good judge of men, a shrewd politician, generous or ruthless as conditions demanded. But he was also stubborn and superstitious; he could overreact to criticism, and he lacked the vision to foresee the consequences of his actions. His greatest weakness was foreign policy.

The civil war

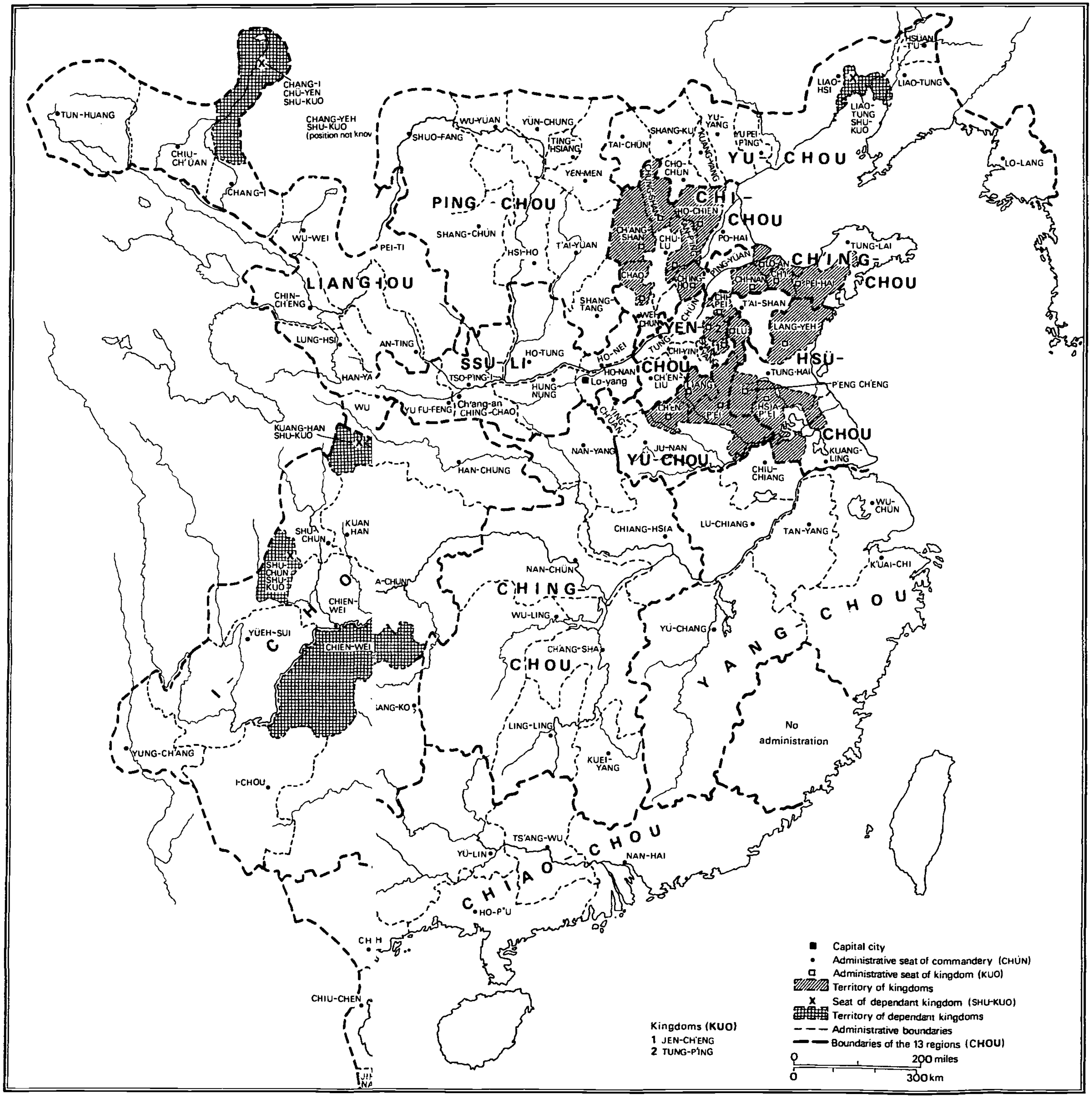
At first, Kuang-wu-ti was only one pretender in a crowded field. Eleven men claimed the imperial dignity at one time or another, not counting warlords of great regional power.[75] Kuang-wu-ti was the most able and lucky, helped by the unwillingness of his enemies to cooperate against him.

By the end of A.D. 25, Kuang-wu-ti controlled the northern part of the Great Plain, had made inroads into the northwest, and had on November 5 accepted the surrender of Lo-yang. On November 27, he entered this city and made it his capital.[76] He had undoubtedly learned from the fates of Wang Mang and the Keng-shih emperor that Ch'ang-an should be avoided in times of civil war. Another motive must have been that Lo-yang could be supplied more easily from the key economic area in the Great Plain.[77] In the following years, Kuang-wu-ti slowly and surely extended his domain in all directions.

The Red Eyebrows, who had been for so long the most formidable military power in China, were meanwhile falling on bad times. By early March of A.D. 26 they had consumed all supplies in Ch'ang-an, and were

75 Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. I, p. 163. 76 *HHS* 1A, p. 25.

77 For the concept of the key economic area of the Great Plain, see Ch'i Ch'ao-ting, *Key economic areas in Chinese history, as revealed in the development of public works for water-control* (London, 1936).



Map 12. The Han empire, A.D. 140

forced to resume their wandering. They sacked and partially burned the city, opened and looted the imperial tombs, and then made their way westward into the sparsely populated and geographically hostile terrain north of the upper Wei River. In all probability, the Red Eyebrows acted from sheer ignorance of local conditions. Weakened by hardship, they were defeated by the warlord Wei Ao, and then further decimated by early frost and snowstorms. They turned back, and in October once more occupied the stricken Ch'ang-an. They left it again in January of A.D. 27, attempting to regain the Great Plain. When they debouched from the pass, they found themselves opposed by the superior troops of Kuang-wu-ti and meekly surrendered two days later, on 15 March.[78]

Long and weary years of war lay before Kuang-wu-ti. The northern plain, so recently conquered by him, became the scene of new uprisings that were not put down until A.D. 29. The southern plain and the Shantung peninsula were subjugated in campaigns lasting from A.D. 26 to 30. The emperor's home commandery, Nan-yang, was bitterly contested, and the lower Han River valley was pacified only in A.D. 29. The various administrators south of the Yangtze acknowledged these victories by recognizing Kuang-wu-ti as Son of Heaven.[79] Eastern Kansu, where Wei Ao led a stubborn separatist movement, resisted even longer. To cope with Wei Ao, Kuang-wu-ti allied himself in A.D. 29 with Tou Jung, another warlord who held the Kansu corridor.[80] The fighting continued until A.D. 34, when the northwest was pacified at last.

Kuang-wu-ti's potentially most dangerous adversary was Kung-sun Shu, who came from a prominent clan in the northwest.[81] He had served under Wang Mang as the governor of a commandery in Szechwan, and there proclaimed himself king of Shu in A.D. 24. In May or June of A.D. 25, he ascended the throne as emperor. His domain extended from the Ch'in-ling Mountains in the north to the Yangtze in the south, from the Tibetan borderlands in the west to below the gorges of the Yangtze in the east. It was almost inaccessible from outside, and was governed from Ch'eng-tu, which lay in a rich agricultural region. The territory has been known in history for its separatist sentiment. But Kung-sun Shu controlled only 7 percent of the total population, and this may be one reason why he sat out the civil war until it was too late. As one of his advisers had proposed, he

78 *HHS* 1A, pp. 28–32; *HHS* 11, pp. 483f.; *HHS* 13, p. 522. For Wei Ao, see *HHS* 13, pp. 513f.; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. II, p. 115.
79 *HHS* 1A, p. 41. For details of the course of these campaigns, see Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. II, pp. 121–56.
80 *HHS* 1B, pp. 48–56; *HHS* 13, pp. 524f.; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. II, pp. 159–80. For Tou Jung, see Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. II, pp. 60–61.
81 For Kung-sun Shu, see *HHS* 13, pp. 533f.; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. II, pp. 181–98.

should have attacked Kuang-wu-ti while the latter was embroiled on other fronts. This opportunity was missed. Kuang-wu-ti, on his part, was careful not to antagonize his rival, and in correspondence even addressed him as emperor.[82] Only when Kuang-wu-ti had conquered the rest of China in A.D. 34 was he ready to take on his last opponent.

Kung-sun Shu's troops had thrown a floating bridge with war towers across the Yangtze below the gorges, a bridge connected with fortifications on both shores. In April or May of A.D. 35, Han naval forces moved to the attack, and aided by a wind from the east, sailed upstream toward the bridge. The timber, ignited by torches, swiftly took fire, and the floating bridge collapsed.[83] The Han armies were now able to invade Kung-sun Shu's domain by land and water. Because of the great topographical obstacles, it necessarily was a difficult and slow campaign. The Han forces did not reach Ch'eng-tu until December of A.D. 36, at a time when they had supplies for only one more week. The commanding general was on the verge of abandoning the operation and withdrawing, when Kung-sun Shu made a sally on 24 December. He was wounded in the fighting and died during the night. Ch'eng-tu surrendered the next day,[84] and this made Kuang-wu-ti the master of China.

The civil war had been fought with swords, lances, crossbows, and propaganda. The usual psychological techniques were employed to gain popular support: prognostications, quotations from the apocryphal books, cosmological arguments, and rhymed lampoons. Kung-sun Shu boldly admitted that Wang Mang had been a legitimate emperor, who had ruled under the power of the element earth. It followed that his own reign was under the next element in the sequence, metal, which meant that his color was white.[85] Metal was correlated with the compass direction west, and Kung-sun Shu's empire was situated in the west of China. This pleasing cosmological symmetry denied Kuang-wu-ti any right to the throne and marked him as an impostor. Kuang-wu-ti, who was worried by this propaganda, had no choice but to claim that the element fire had not been superseded; it had only declined temporarily and then regained its power. Consequently the turn of the subsequent elements had not yet come, so that both Wang Mang and Kung-sun Shu were the usurpers.

In addition, Kuang-wu-ti and Kung-sun Shu hurled various prophecies at each other, seeking to prove that they had the Mandate of Heaven. It even happened that the same prophecy served both contending parties.

82 *HHS* 13, p. 538. 83 *HHS* 1B, p. 57; *HHS* 13, p. 542; *HHS* 17, p. 661; *HHS* 18, p. 693.
84 *HHS* 1B, p. 59; *HHS* 13, p. 543; *HHS* 18, pp. 693–94; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. II, p. 197.
85 *HHS* 13, pp. 535, 538; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. II, pp. 233f.

Kung-sun Shu asserted that a man had appeared to him in a dream, saying: "Kung-sun, twelve are the limit." The number twelve referred to the twelve Former Han rulers (including the empress Lü), so that according to this message the Han dynasty had run its course, and Kung-sun Shu was destined to supplant it. Later, the propagandists of Kuang-wu-ti reinterpreted the prophecy. Noting that Kung-sun was attacked in the twelfth year of his reign, they threw the prophecy back at him: "Kung-sun, twelve (years) are your limit."[86]

Typical of the entire civil war was its intense regionalism; Kuang-wu-ti's victory was in a sense the victory of his home commandery, Nan-yang. Through him, men from that region gained and held on to a prominent role in government for a long time to come. Another feature of these troubled times was the absence of revolutionary aims. There is no evidence to suggest that any of the contending parties were fired by revolutionary aims or that any of the leaders sought to overturn the accepted system of imperial rule. When the Red Eyebrows roamed China, and when the chieftains and the members of the old Nan-yang gentry confronted each other under the Keng-shih emperor, this was not a class struggle. Whatever their background, all accepted the existing social and political order. They only struggled for dominance within it.

The new imperial house

With the restoration of the dynasty, Kuang-wu-ti faced the problem of what to do with the surviving heirs to Former Han fiefs of the imperial house. The fiefs had been abolished by Wang Mang, and the marquises had been demoted to commoners. On 26 January A.D. 27, the emperor decided that a search should be made for the heirs and that they would be reinstated.[87] But the search may not have been too thorough, since in A.D. 37 the marquises of the imperial house numbered only 137. This figure is about a hundred below the corresponding total of A.D. 5. Allowing for the fact that Kuang-wu-ti also created new marquisates for his own relatives, it follows that the majority of the old marquisates were not renewed.

Kuang-wu-ti's unwillingness to revive the old order fully is even more apparent in the case of the kingdoms. During the Former Han, all sons of emperors other than the heir apparent had been nominated kings over specified areas, and twenty-three such kingdoms had existed in A.D. 5.[88]

86 *HHS* 13, p. 535; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. II, pp. 245f.
87 *HHS* 1A, p. 31; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. III, *BMFEA*, 39:5 (1967), 44f.
88 For the institution of the kingdoms and their subsequent history, see Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. III, pp. 22f.; and Chapter 2 above, pp. 124f., 139f.

For political reasons, Kuang-wu-ti at first restored many of the old kingdoms and created another seven for certain relatives of his own. In A.D. 34 and 35, three of these were discontinued after the deaths of their kings. With the end of the civil war in 36, the emperor could manage without the support of the former imperial house. He abolished all kingdoms and demoted their holders to marquises on 1 April 37, with only three exceptions.[89] These were the kingdoms of his paternal uncle Liu Liang, and of his two nephews Liu Chang and Liu Hsing, sons of the late Liu Po-sheng. One day later, these three men were demoted to dukes (*kung*). On 13 May 39, the emperor created duchies also for his own sons other than the heir apparent.[90] His three eldest daughters were granted the titles of princesses during the same year, and perhaps on the same occasion. The two youngest daughters were granted the same rank in 41 and 45, respectively. Kuang-wu-ti's sisters were made elder princesses as early as A.D. 26. On 1 December A.D. 41 Kuang-wu-ti promoted his sons to kings, and on 21 June A.D. 43 he also elevated the duchies of his nephews and that of his late uncle to kingdoms.

With these enactments, Kuang-wu-ti had restored the traditional system by which the Han imperial house supported its members. In the course of time, the kingdoms were concentrated on the Great Plain and the Shantung peninsula. No conclusions can be drawn from their numbers, since these depended on the imperial birth rate, but it is to be noted that they grew somewhat in size. In A.D. 2 and 140, the number of kingdoms was the same, being twenty in each case. During the former year, the royal fiefs had comprised 1,353,000 households, a figure which by A.D. 140 had increased by about half a million, to 1,892,000.

From the point of view of concentrating imperial power and control, the restoration of the kingdoms was a retrograde step. Although the kings had been stripped of all territorial power between 154 and 145 B.C., and the government usually insisted on keeping them in their fiefs, away from the capital, they could be a real or imagined challenge to the throne. Opportunists, malcontents, and charlatans flocked to these royal courts. Some of the kings were simple-minded or unbalanced, and the emperors were prone to panic at reports of black magic.[91] Three of Kuang-wu-ti's sons were accused of treason, and two of these ended their lives by their own hands.

The first case involved Liu Ching, a full brother of Kuang-wu-ti's succes-

89 *HHS* 1B, p. 61.

90 *HHS* 1B, p. 66; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. III, pp. 26f. The title *kung* (duke) was not used in the Former Han for members of the imperial house. In A.D. 9, Wang Mang had abolished the title of *chu-hou-wang* and replaced it by *kung* (*HS* 99B, p. 4105 [Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 274]).

91 That is, *wu-ku*. For the classic case in which this affected dynastic history, in 91 B.C., see Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, Chapter 2; and Chapter 2 above, pp. 173f.

sor Ming-ti (r. A.D. 57–75), who surrounded himself with physiognomists and astrologers. On Kuang-wu-ti's death in A.D. 57, he tried to incite a half-brother to rebellion. The matter came out and was hushed up by the new ruler, but when Liu Ching did not mend his ways he was transferred to a lesser fief. In the early sixties, he had the idea of becoming emperor himself and consulted a physiognomist as to whether or not he should rebel. Once more the matter was hushed up. In A.D. 67 it became known that Liu Ching employed shamans to perform sacrifices and invoke curses. High officials proposed that Liu Ching should be executed, but this suggestion was angrily rejected by Ming-ti. Finally the emperor followed advice and condemned his brother to death, whereupon Liu Ching committed suicide. He had clearly been demented.[92]

A more important affair involved Liu Ying, who was king of Ch'u (a small kingdom on the southern plain) and half-brother of Ming-ti. His sponsorship of Buddhism in A.D. 65 is the first documented case of Buddhist practices in China.[93] Liu Ying was also interested in Taoism and alchemy, and surrounded himself with adepts. Clearly his goal was not the throne, but longevity or immortality. He was denounced for these activities in A.D. 70, and high officials advised that he should be executed for treason. Ming-ti refused to allow this, but demoted his half-brother and exiled him to a place south of the lower Yangtze. On his arrival there in A.D. 71, he committed suicide. Thousands of his supposed adherents were arrested and implicated each other under torture. The trials and executions continued until 2 June A.D. 77, when Ming-ti's son and successor brought them to a halt. It is next to certain that no serious conspiracy had existed other than in the mind of a suspicious ruler.[94]

The third case concerned Liu Yen, another half-brother of Ming-ti, who in A.D. 73 was accused of having used magic for treasonable purposes. Many individuals were executed, but Liu Yen was merely transferred to a smaller kingdom. Similar accusations were leveled against him in 76, and this time he was demoted to marquis. In 87 he once more was made a king, dying a natural death two years later. Liu Yen had probably been more gullible than culpable, and his interest in the occult had been exaggerated into a peril to the throne.[95]

In common with all adult or even adolescent emperors, Kuang-wu-ti kept a harem, usually referred to as the Lateral Courts (I-t'ing). He simpli-

92 For Liu Ching, see Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. III, p. 31f.

93 *HHS* 42, pp. 1428–30; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. III, pp. 33f.; E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist conquest of China* (Leiden, 1959), pp. 26f.; and Chapter 16 below, pp. 821f.

94 *HHS* 2, p. 117; *HHS* 3, p. 135. 95 Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. III, p. 35.

fied its administration by reducing the ranks of the ladies other than the empress from fourteen to three, those of honorable lady, beautiful lady and chosen lady.[96] Each rank contained progressively more women. Some of the other Former Han ranks reappeared during later reigns. By the middle of the second century A.D., the harem ladies numbered six thousand, twice as many as during the height of the preceding dynasty.

Girls were selected for the harem in the eighth month of each year. Virgin daughters of blameless families, aged thirteen to twenty, were inspected by a senior counsellor of the palace, a eunuch assistant of the imperial harem, and a physiognomist as to beauty, complexion, hair, carriage, elegance, manners, and respectability, and in the process were graded on a scale which apparently had nine levels.[97] Those who satisfied the standards were brought to the harem, where they had to undergo further tests before finally being accepted or rejected. One of the honorable ladies was always enthroned as empress, but that was a momentous matter for which it was not enough to come from a family that was merely blameless. Almost all Later Han empresses belonged to the highest level of society; they wielded considerable power, and their selections and divorces were politically motivated. The personal affection of the emperor did not enter into the matter, which is also shown by the fact that eight of the eleven Later Han empresses were childless.

Table 9 summarizes the genealogy of the Later Han emperors. Such a stark outline disguises the power struggles, successes, failures, and personal tragedies which are so typical of the dynasty. These will be considered later; here only one further observation needs to be made.

Some authors have claimed that imperial lines inevitably degenerate. The founder possesses great ability and energy, and his drive is carried on for a few generations. Later rulers, raised in a luxurious and intrigue-ridden court, and indulging in alcohol and sex, are likely to be weaklings. This view does not stand up to closer scrutiny and stems from a misunderstanding of Chinese historiography. Dynasty founders who received the Mandate of Heaven are depicted by the ancient historian as men of extraordinary ability, head and shoulders above their contemporaries. Those unworthy of the mandate are described as libertines. It is typical that toward the end of his reign, Wang Mang is said to have been "daily in his harem . . . giving himself up to lustful pleasures," and the Keng-shih emperor supposedly

96 For the basic complement of fourteen grades, see *HS* 97A, p. 3935; *HHS* 10A, pp. 399–400, note 6. The lowest grade included ladies who were classified in accordance with six titles. For practice under Wang Mang, see *HS* 99C, p. 4180 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 438).

97 *HHS* 10A, p. 400. Ages are in Chinese reckoning, i.e., one year at birth, and one year older at each subsequent New Year's day.

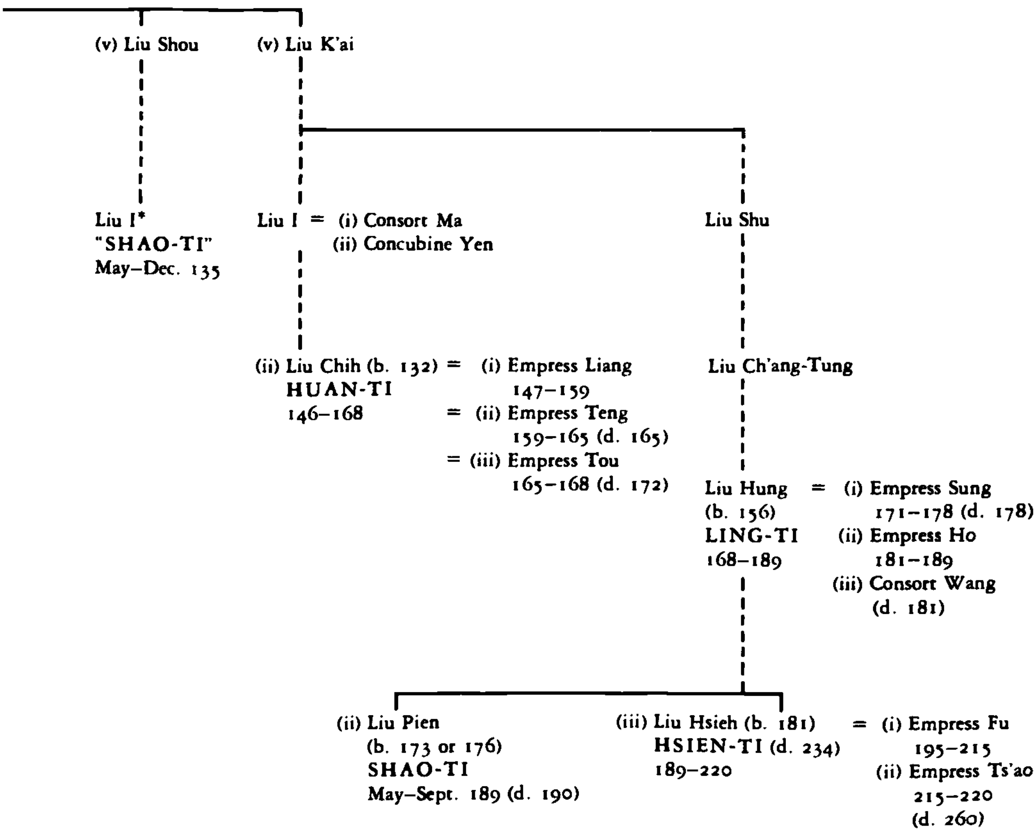
TABLE 9

Genealogy of Later Han emperors

Liu Hsiu (b. 5 B.C.) = (i) Empress Kuo 26–41
KUANG-WU-TI = (ii) Empress Yin 41–57 (d. 64)
25–57

- (i) Liu Ch'iang
- (ii) Liu Yang (b. 28) MING-TI 57-75 = (i) Empress Ma 60–75 (d. 79); (ii) Consort Chia
  - Liu Ta (b. 57) CHANG-TI 75–88 = (i) Empress Tou 78–88 (d. 97); (ii) (Name unknown); (iii) Consort Sung (d. 82); (iv) Consort Liang (d. 83); (v) Consort Shen
    - (ii) Liu K'ang d. 93
      - Liu Chung (Fu-hu) d. 121
        - Liu Hung d. 141 = Consort Ch'en
          - Liu Tsuan (b. 138) CHIH-TI 145–146
    - (iii) Liu Ch'ing d. 107 = (i) Consort Keng; (ii) Concubine Tso
      - (ii) Liu Yu (b. 94) AN-TI 106–125 = (i) Empress Yen 115–125 (d. 126); (ii) Consort Li
        - (ii) Liu Pao (b. 115) SHUN-TI 125–144 = (i) Empress Liang 132–144 (d. 150); (ii) Consort Yü
          - (ii) Liu Ping (b. 143) CH'UNG-TI 144–145
    - (iv) Liu Chao (b. 79) HO-TI 88–106 = (i) Empress Yin 96–102; (ii) Empress Teng 102–106 (d. 121); (iii) Concubine (name unknown)
      - (iii) Liu Lung SHANG-TI (b. 105) Feb.–Sept. 106

*Date of birth unknown.


(v) Liu Shou
(v) Liu K'ai
Liu I*
"SHAO-TI"
May–Dec. 135
Liu I = (i) Consort Ma
(ii) Concubine Yen
Liu Shu
(ii) Liu Chih (b. 132) = (i) Empress Liang
HUAN-TI
146–168
147–159
= (ii) Empress Teng
159–165 (d. 165)
= (iii) Empress Tou
165–168 (d. 172)
Liu Ch'ang-Tung
Liu Hung = (i) Empress Sung
(b. 156)
171–178 (d. 178)
LING-TI
(ii) Empress Ho
168–189
181–189
(iii) Consort Wang
(d. 181)
(ii) Liu Pien
(b. 173 or 176)
SHAO-TI
May–Sept. 189 (d. 190)
(iii) Liu Hsieh (b. 181)
HSIEN-TI (d. 234)
189–220
= (i) Empress Fu
195–215
(ii) Empress Ts'ao
215–220
(d. 260)

spent days and nights drinking with the women of his harem, often being too drunk to give audience.[98] It is true, of course, that imperial succession was manipulated and abused, but this was due to power struggles and not to a moral and physical enfeeblement of the imperial line.

What might look like increasing degeneration of the rulers is rather the historiographical attempt to justify the coming and passing of the Mandate of Heaven. Neither is there conclusive evidence that emperors raised within the court were prone to be weaklings. Wu-ti (r. 141–87 B.C.) of the Former Han was the most energetic ruler of his dynasty, and several Later Han emperors proved themselves competent in spite of this supposed handicap. Hsüan-ti (r. 74–48 B.C.), who had been brought up as a commoner, was certainly an excellent ruler.[99] But An-ti (r. A.D. 106–125), who also spent his formative years outside the palace, was the worst sovereign of the two Han dynasties. Evidence is lacking, therefore, to show that the moral caliber of the imperial house progressively declined.

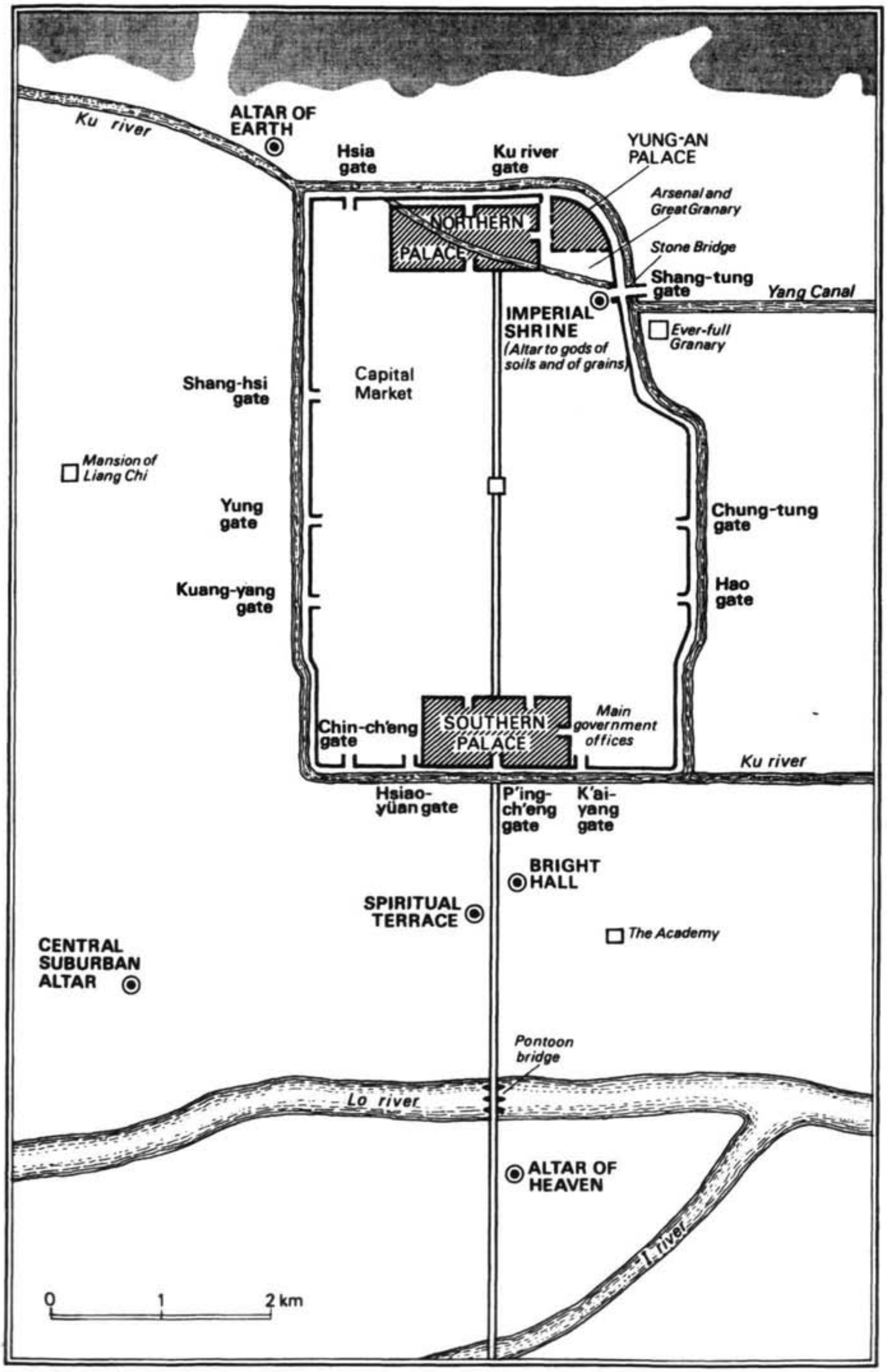
The capital

The founder of Later Han chose Lo-yang as his capital on 27 November A.D. 25.[100] With an area of 10.1 square kilometers (3.9 square miles), the roughly rectangular Lo-yang was, after Ch'ang-an and Rome, the third-largest walled city in the world. The walls were constructed by the tamped earth method, and their remains still measure up to ten meters in height today. The city was oriented along a north-south axis, the streets forming a rough grid, and the wards being surrounded by walls. Two walled palace compounds were located within and at opposite ends of the city; these were the Northern and Southern Palaces, each measuring about 125 acres. They were connected by an elevated, covered passageway. The city itself was filled with ministries, offices, an arsenal, shrines, two gardens, a granary, probably one market, and the residences of nobles and officials. Outside the city wall, with its twelve gates, was a moat. A canal connecting with it from the east served for shipping supplies to the capital. Pumps and norias on the southern moat supplied the city with water.

98 For the view that imperial lines degenerate, see Edwin O. Reischauer and John K. Fairbank, *East Asia: The great tradition* (London, 1958), pp. 115–16; and John K. Fairbank, *The United States and China* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), p. 90. For criticism of indulgences, see, e.g., *HS* 99C, p. 4180 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 439–40).

99 For a different appraisal of Wu-ti, see Chapter 2, p. 153. For Hsüan-ti's upbringing and his first attention to affairs of state after the death of Huo Kuang (68 B.C.), see *HS* 68, p. 2951; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, p. 131.

100 *HHS* 1A, p. 25. For a full-scale study of Lo-yang, see Hans Bielenstein, "Lo-yang in Later Han times," *BMFEA* 48 (1976), 1–142; see also Wang Zhongshu, *Han civilization*, trans. K. C. Chang et. al. (New Haven and London, 1982), Chapter 2.



Map 13. Lo-yang, capital of Later Han
After H. Bielenstein. *BMFEA* 48 (1976).

Beyond the moat were sprawling suburbs, divided into the usual wards. Greater Lo-yang measured roughly 24.5 square kilometers, and had a population of probably no less than half a million. This made it the most populous city in the world at that time. A number of important buildings were situated within the suburbs south of the city, including the Spiritual Terrace, which was the imperial observatory, the Bright Hall (Ming-t'ang), which was a cosmological temple, and the Academy (T'ai-hsüeh), which eventually had more than 30,000 students.[101] There were two additional markets in the suburbs, another granary serving the purpose of price stabilization, and a lodge built to house two famous bronze statues.

Among the farmlands in the open country were the Altars of Heaven and Earth, five cosmological altars, lesser shrines, imperial parks and funeral workshops, two great hunting preserves, mansions of the rich and powerful, and the imperial tombs.

Lo-yang was more compact and austere than the Ch'ang-an of Former Han times, and it was, like all Chinese cities, constructed of perishable materials.[102] While it lasted, it must have been a magnificent city. The end came soon after the massacre of the eunuchs in A.D. 189. The troops of the warlord Tung Cho looted Lo-yang for weeks, and finally destroyed it utterly on 1 May A.D. 190. The ruin of the city was so complete that the Wei dynasty had to rebuild it from the ground up within the still existing walls.[103]

Borders and neighbors

The borders of Later Han were the traditional ones (see Maps 12 and 16). In the north, the empire was defended by the Great Wall. In the west, it petered out in the wilderness of the Tibetan and Burmese borderlands. In the south, it reached along the coast into what is now Vietnam. In Korea, it held the lowlands facing China, roughly as far south as the area of present-day Seoul. But all parts of the empire were not under the same firm control; in some territories, Chinese authority was loose or even nominal. Fukien was entirely outside the border. Separated from the interior of China by a barrier of mountains, it was absorbed late, through a gradual and relatively peaceful immigration of Chinese farmers that began at the end of the second century A.D. There existed only one Chinese town in

101 This figure is given for the reign of Huan-ti (A.D. 146–168): *HHS* 67, p. 2186; *HHS* 79A, p. 2547.

102 For Ch'ang-an, see Stephen James Hotaling, "The city walls of Han Ch'ang-an," *TP* 64:1–3 (1978), 1–46; Wang Zhongshu, *Han civilization*, Chapter 1; and Chapter 2 above, pp. 131f.

103 *HHS* 9, p. 370; *HHS* 72, p. 2325; Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," pp. 89f.

Fukien, near the mouth of the Min River, which served as a port for shipping along the coast.[104]

As in the past, China's most formidable neighbors were the Hsiung-nu in Central Asia. They interfered actively in the civil war, supporting one of the pretenders and frequently raiding the northern Chinese countryside.[105] Kuang-wu-ti's military attitude was entirely defensive, even though with the end of the civil war in A.D. 36 he was strong enough to take the offensive. That year, he had new fortifications constructed in order to block the traditional invasion route into Shansi. From A.D. 38, a second line of defense was built across central Shansi, a third to shield the Great Plain against attacks through Shansi, and a fourth and fifth for the protection of northern Shensi and the lower Wei River valley. All walls were equipped with watchtowers and the usual apparatus for signaling.[106] This did not prevent the Hsiung-nu from keeping up their raids, breaching or going around the fortifications, and roaming through large parts of the northwest at will. Chinese farmers were fleeing the border areas, and the Chinese government sanctioned and even aided this migration, as shown by edicts in A.D. 33, 34, 39, and 44. In the end, the Hsiung-nu simply remained and lived within China's traditional borders.[107]

At this stage, dissension among the Hsiung-nu offered the Chinese government an unexpected opportunity for diplomatic and military initiatives. The conservative *shan-yü*, who had come to the throne in A.D. 18 and for so long had been a bitter enemy of China, died in 46. After the murder of the half-Chinese I-t'u-chih-ya-shih, no members of his generation remained. The dignity of the *shan-yü* should now have been inherited by Pi, the eldest heir in the next generation. However, the late *shan-yü* had changed the succession in favor of his own son. When the new *shan-yü* died almost immediately in A.D. 46, he was followed on the throne by his youngest brother P'u-nu (r. 46–83), and Pi saw himself again passed over.[108]

Pi probably did not at first belong to the pro-Chinese peace party which, although weakened, still existed. It was rather a consequence of his dynastic struggle with a conservative *shan-yü* that the peace party gave him its support. Tensions rose between Pi, P'u-nu, and their supporters, aggravated by a disastrous drought. Kuang-wu-ti at last contemplated an attack. In this situation, P'u-nu made peace overtures. Were these to meet with success, Pi would be politically neutralized. He therefore secretly sent a

104 See Hans Bielenstein, "The Chinese colonization of Fukien until the end of T'ang," in *Studia Serica Bernhard Karlgren dedicata*, ed. Søren Egerod and Else Glahn (Copenhagen, 1959), pp. 98–122.
105 Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. III, pp. 102f.
106 *HHS* 1B, p. 60; *HHS* 22, p. 779; *HHS* 89, p. 2940.
107 *HHS* 1B, pp. 55, 57, 64, 73.
108 *HHS* 89, p. 2942; and pp. 235f. above.

Chinese on his staff to the emperor and offered what amounted to submission. All of this took place before the end of A.D. 46. In 47, Pi developed his Chinese contacts further, and simultaneously mobilized his forces against the *shan-yü*. On 25 January A.D. 49, he adopted his grandfather's designation and proclaimed himself the second Hu-han-yeh *shan-yü*. The Chinese henceforth distinguished between the northern Hsiung-nu under the northern *shan-yü*, and the southern Hsiung-nu under the southern *shan-yü*. War immediately broke out between the two federations, of which the southern was the weaker.[109]

In the spring of A.D. 50, two Chinese envoys met with the southern *shan-yü*, and in a public ceremony told him to prostrate himself. The *shan-yü* acquiesced after a moment of hesitation. He was then presented with an imperial seal of pure gold and various gifts of great value. At the end of the same year, he was permitted to take up his residence in Mei-chi county, situated in the northeastern Ordos region. The southern *shan-yü* thereupon allocated northern Shansi, the entire Ordos region, and adjoining parts of Kansu to the eight tribal divisions under his command. These, under their hereditary chiefs, continued their nomadic life and roved the Chinese northwest with their herds. Since the Hsiung-nu in the recent past had inhabited the same territory, the emperor had merely granted them what they already possessed. Attempts to send back the displaced Chinese farmers to their northwestern homelands proved a dismal failure. In practical terms, Kuang-wu-ti had consented to a foreign, semi-independent state within the Chinese borders.

The negotiations between the southern *shan-yü* and the Chinese emperor are described in the sources by the same stereotyped vocabulary as the peace offer of the first Hu-han-yeh *shan-yü*. But conditions were different. The first Hu-han-yeh *shan-yü* had concluded a treaty on equal terms (51 B.C.), and had returned to the grazing grounds north of the Gobi. The second Hu-han-yeh or southern *shan-yü* was more vulnerable. The majority of the Hsiung-nu had rallied to his rival who, forced by circumstances, was willing to make peace with China. To forestall such an alliance, which would have spelled his own doom, the southern *shan-yü* had to humble himself in seeking Chinese support and to go through motions that symbolized submission. It was not a submission in the true sense, but it served its purpose.[110]

109 *HHS* 1B, p. 76; *HHS* 19, p. 715; *HHS* 89, pp. 2942–43; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. III, p. 119.

110 *HHS* 1B, p. 78; *HHS* 89, pp. 2943–44. For the exchange of gifts and hostages on this occasion, see Chapter 6 below, pp. 400f. For earlier arrangements whereby non-Chinese inhabited areas known as dependent states (*shu-kuo*) or protectorates (*pao*), see Michael Loewe, *Records of Han administration* (Cambridge, 1967), Vol. I, pp. 61–64.; and Chapter 7 below, p. 474.

At this point, Kuang-wu-ti committed the greatest error of his reign, a blunder which belongs among the worst in Chinese history. He should, in coalition with the southern Hsiung-nu, have attacked the federation of the northern Hsiung-nu. Such a campaign was warmly advocated by Chinese generals in A.D. 51, and almost certainly would have been successful. The southern *shan-yü* would have returned to the lands north of the Gobi as the sole ruler of the Hsiung-nu, and China would have regained the northwestern border commanderies.[111] This opportunity was lost not because it entailed a military risk, but because Kuang-wu-ti failed to recognize its advantage. He probably had the more limited goal in mind of splitting the Hsiung-nu nation into halves, the Great Wall keeping the southern Hsiung-nu in as well as the northern Hsiung-nu out. It is a fact that the border fortifications were maintained and manned by Chinese troops. Kuang-wu-ti may also have counted on the southern Hsiung-nu to assist the Chinese armies in times of war. But these were self-deceiving rationalizations. The emperor had settled on a policy of laissez faire, for which China was to pay a high price.

Diplomatic relations between the Chinese government and the southern Hsiung-nu soon settled down into routine. An official entitled *Hsiung-mu chung-lang-chiang* (leader of the gentlemen of the palace in charge of the Hsiung-nu) with a sizable staff and some troops was the Chinese representative at the court of the southern *shan-yü* in Mei-chi. A son of the southern *shan-yü* stayed as a hostage at the imperial court. At the end of each year, Hsiung-nu envoys and a Chinese official escorted a new hostage to the capital, while the old hostage was conducted back to his father. The two delegations met en route, undoubtedly to make sure that both sides honored the agreement. The Hsiung-nu envoys attended the New Year ceremonies in Lo-yang. Guided by Chinese officials, they then returned to Mei-chi with the imperial New Year gifts for the southern *shan-yü*, his mother, his principal wives, his sons, and the high Hsiung-nu dignitaries. These gifts were standardized to exact amounts, and consisted of silk, brocade, gold, and foodstuffs. When a southern *shan-yü* died, the Chinese representative at the Hsiung-nu court condoled and sacrificed, and the emperor presented the successor and his dignitaries with gifts in fixed quantities.[112]

The southern Hsiung-nu kept their tribal organization and customs. At the occasion of the Dragon Sacrifices in the first, fifth, and ninth months of each year, the chiefs of the tribal divisions met with the *shan-yü* to conduct affairs of state, but otherwise they were unchallenged in their territorial

111 For the arguments put forward on this occasion, see *HHS* 18, pp. 695f.; *HHS* 89, pp. 2945–46; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. III, p. 123. 112 *HHS* 89, pp. 2943f.

possessions. The first southern *shan-yü* never came to the Chinese court, and only two of his successors made official visits, in A.D. 107 and 216.[113]

The southern Hsiung-nu fought many independent engagements with the northern Hsiung-nu, and in the early years also participated in imperial campaigns. The Chinese government finally abandoned its passive attitude, and in A.D. 73 joined with the southern Hsiung-nu in an attack on the northern federation. Pressure was kept up in the following years. It culminated in the great joint offensive of A.D. 89, when forces under the command of the general of chariots and cavalry (*chü-chi chiang-chün*), Tou Hsien, crossed the Gobi and routed the northern Hsiung-nu.[114] Additional operations followed the victory, but the defeat of the northern Hsiung-nu changed nothing. While their federation dissolved, two of their former subject peoples, the Hsien-pi and Wu-huan, took their place in Central Asia and became China's mortal enemies. The southern Hsiung-nu remained on Chinese soil and could no longer be dislodged. Victory over the northern Hsiung-nu had come forty years too late.

From A.D. 93 onward, tensions increased among the southern Hsiung-nu, and between them and the Chinese. Open clashes alternated for the next hundred years with limited cooperation, in a situation that became more and more volatile and complex. At the end of the second century A.D., the southern *shan-yü* took up residence in southern Shansi, an area much closer to the central parts of the empire. It was here that their descendants rose against the Western Chin in A.D. 308. The collapse of that dynasty, the loss of northern China, and the period of disunity lasting until A.D. 589 were direct consequences of Kuang-wu-ti's short-sighted policy. His successors must share some of the blame, but the ultimate responsibility rests with him.

A by-product of the victories over the northern Hsiung-nu was the reconquest of the Western Regions. After the fall of Wang Mang, the various oasis states along the silk routes had been left to their own devices.[115] Although Kuang-wu-ti could have exploited pro-Chinese sentiments, particularly in Yarkand (So-chü), he not only failed to do so, but also managed to antagonize its king to the point where he broke with China. A delegation from sixteen states of the Western Regions in A.D. 45 could not persuade the emperor to reestablish Chinese protectorship.[116] To

113 *HHS* 9, p. 388; *HHS* 89, pp. 2957, 2965.

114 For the campaigns of A.D. 73, see *HHS* 2, pp. 120f.; *HHS* 89, p. 2949. For the campaign of A.D. 89, see *HHS* 4, pp. 168–69; *HHS* 23, pp. 814f.; *HHS* 89, p. 2953.

115 *HHS* 88, p. 2909; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. III, pp. 131f.; and pp. 238–39 above. A somewhat different view of the relations that persisted in Kuang-wu-ti's reign is presented in the grandiloquent appreciation at the end of *HS* 96B, p. 3930 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 203).

116 *HHS* 1B, p. 73; *HHS* 88, p. 2924.

a last request from the king of Cherchen (Lou-lan, later Shan-shan), Kuang-wu-ti replied that the states of the Western Regions should do as they pleased. Thereafter the western and eastern halves of the Tarim Basin fell under the respective dominations of Yarkand and the northern Hsiung-nu.

When the northern Hsiung-nu were attacked in A.D. 73, a Chinese garrison was stationed at Hami (I-wu-lu) on the northern silk route to the Turfan oasis, and in the following year the office of protector-general of the Western Regions was revived. This proved to be premature. The states of the Western Regions were no longer able or eager to return to the Chinese fold, and in A.D. 75 killed the protector-general. In 77 the Chinese government withdrew the garrison from Hami.[117] But the collapse of the northern Hsiung-nu federation after A.D. 89 made it possible to reestablish the protector of the western regions. The man who contributed more than any other to China's renewed presence was Pan Ch'ao, brother of the historian Pan Ku and son of the historian and Central Asian expert Pan Piao.

Pan Ch'ao had earlier been grotesquely miscast as an imperial librarian, but in A.D. 73 he came into his own. Having distinguished himself in the campaign against the northern Hsiung-nu as a junior officer, he was that year sent to the Western Regions. He returned briefly to report to his commanding officer, and then spent the next three decades in Central Asia. In early 92, Pan Ch'ao was appointed protector-general of the Western Regions. Through patient diplomacy and, when necessary, force, he established and maintained Chinese control over the oasis states. Recalled on his own request to China in A.D. 102, he died one month later.[118] The office of protector-general of the Western Regions was abolished in A.D. 107, after which officials of lesser rank acted as China's representatives in Central Asia. Soon after the middle of the second century A.D., the Chinese hold on the Western Regions ended.

The southern Hsiung-nu were the most important element of the tension in the northwest, but not the only one. From A.D. 49 onward, the founder of the Later Han also admitted Wu-huan tribes to the northwest and the mountainous commanderies north of the Great Plain.[119] Of greater importance was the encroachment of Tibetans (Ch'iang) from the west. They had lived intermingled with the Chinese in Kansu ever since these territories had become part of the Chinese empire, and their numbers had increased through steady infiltration during the civil war. Wang Mang's conquests at Kokonor (Ch'ing-hai) were lost in the process and not regained during the

117 *HHS* 2, pp. 120f.; *HHS* 3, p. 135; *HHS* 88, p. 2928.
118 *HHS* 3, pp. 136, 141, 156, 158; *HHS* 4, pp. 170, 179; *HHS* 47, pp. 1571f.; *HHS* 88, pp. 2910, 2926, 2928.
119 *HHS* 90, p. 2982; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. III, pp. 130f.; and Chapter 6 below, pp. 438f.

Later Han. The more recent Tibetan invaders retained their tribal organization under chiefs, subsisted on a mixed economy based on the herding of livestock and some agriculture, traded with the Chinese, and were often badly treated by the authorities. Throughout the Later Han, irritations between the Chinese and Tibetans continued to fester, aggravated by Tibetan raids from beyond the border. Chinese defense was weak, and peaceful years were few. The Wei River valley was a favorite target for Tibetan raids, and in A.D. 108 and 111 these reached as far as the Great Plain. The Chinese even had to suffer the indignity of a Tibetan chief proclaiming himself Son of Heaven in A.D. 108.[120]

The Chinese farmers responded to mounting pressure from the nomadic southern Hsiung-nu and semi-nomadic Tibetans by abandoning their lands. Some were evacuated by the government, but the majority withdrew voluntarily in what became a great migration southward. The loss of the political and economic importance of Ch'ang-an and its environs contributed to the depopulation.[121] The process began in the reign of Kuang-wu-ti, and was reaching its end in the middle of the second century A.D. The migrants crossed the Ch'in-ling Mountains, settling again in Szechwan and, to a lesser extent, in Yunnan. As the censuses of A.D. 2 and 140 show, the northwest lost 6.5 million inhabitants, or about 70 percent of its population during that period. It has been seen that on the Great Plain changes in the course of the Yellow River had set another great southward migration in motion during the time when Wang Mang was in power. The two migrations reduced the population of northern China to such an extent that fewer officials were needed in the local administration. Kuang-wu-ti acknowledged this by abolishing more than four hundred counties in A.D. 30.[122] The magnitude of that figure is brought out by the fact that it represents more than one-fourth of all the counties which had existed in A.D. 2.

In northern China, the Chinese were the sole inhabitants of the Great Plain, Shantung, southern Shansi, and the Nan-yang basin. Everywhere else in the north, they shared the land with non-Chinese peoples. In southern China, Chinese and aboriginal tribes lived together in all parts of the country. But there the situation was the exact reverse of what it was in the north. The Chinese population increased through immigration, and in conflicts with the tribes, the Chinese dominated. Except for the southwest, Chinese superiority was never in doubt.

120 *HHS* 5, pp. 209, 216; *HHS* 87, pp. 2878f.; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. III, pp. 134f. For the part played by Ma Yüan in relations with the Tibetans during Kuang-wu-ti's reign, see *HHS* 24, pp. 835f.; see also Chapter 6 below, pp. 424f.

121 Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. III, pp. 140f. 122 *HHS* 1B, p. 49.

This is not to say that the Chinese faced no opposition. In March of A.D. 40, the Yüeh people rose in the Red River delta of present North Vietnam.[123] They were led by the Cheng (Tr'ung) sisters, Cheng Ts'e and Cheng Erh, daughters of a local chief. Other Yüeh tribes along the coast to the north and south responded, and Cheng Ts'e proclaimed herself queen. She was apparently able to dominate the countryside, but could not overrun the fortified towns. The government in Lo-yang reacted slowly, and Kuang-wu-ti did not give orders for a campaign until May or June of A.D. 42. Ma Yüan was placed in command and given the title *fu-po chiang-chün* (general who calms the waves).

Ma Yüan belonged to a prominent northwestern clan; he had voluntarily joined Kuang-wu-ti in A.D. 28, and had fought successful battles against the Tibetans from 35 to 37. Ma Yüan and his staff traveled to southern China and there mobilized an army. Having reached Kwangtung, Ma Yüan dispatched a fleet of supply ships along the coast, and with his land forces marched through difficult terrain toward the Red River delta. He arrived there early in 43, and completed the operation by April or May of the same year. The Cheng sisters were captured and decapitated. Mopping-up operations lasted until the end of 43.[124]

The sources claim that after his victory, Ma Yüan became a benefactor of the Yüeh people, bringing them the blessings of Chinese civilization. In reality, he attempted to break down tribal customs, to sinicize the colony so that it could be more easily governed by its Chinese masters. To that end, he confiscated and melted down the bronze drums of the Yüeh tribes, symbols of the authority of their chiefs. The model of a horse was cast from this bronze, and Ma Yüan presented it to the emperor on his return to Lo-yang in the fall of A.D. 44.[125] The general who calms the waves later became a god in popular religion who was long worshipped in the southern parts of China.

The resistance of the Yüeh people undoubtedly had nationalist overtones, but this was not the only cause. The number of aboriginal uprisings in southern China shows an extraordinary increase during the Later Han. From 200 to 1 B.C., there had been three uprisings in all, affecting only two commanderies in the southwest. From A.D. 1 to 200, fifty-three uprisings occurred, involving no less than twenty-one of southern China's twenty-six commanderies. The explanation for this striking increase is not

123 For earlier Chinese relations with and advances to the south, see Chapter 2 above pp. 128, 152, 169; and Chapter 6 below, pp. 451f.

124 *HHS* 1B, pp. 66f.; *HHS* 24, pp. 838f.; *HHS* 86, pp. 2836f.

125 For the Dong-son culture, of which these drums were presumably examples, see William Watson, *Cultural frontiers in ancient East Asia* (Edinburgh, 1971), pp. 148f.

hard to find: it was Chinese immigration. During Former Han, aboriginal tribes and Chinese had coexisted simply because the latter were few. The large Chinese influx during the Later Han changed all that. The colonists moved deeper and deeper into the south along the river valleys, appropriating for themselves the rich alluvial soil on both sides of the watercourses. If the aboriginals acquiesced, they were counted and taxed by the officials, and partly assimilated through sinification and intermarriage. If they objected, they had to withdraw into the mountain valleys and fight for their freedom as mountain bandits. Many resisted the Chinese in one fierce conflict after another. Chinese efforts to protect the settlements, and campaigns to defeat aboriginals, whom the government chose to regard as rebels, were a steady drain on the state's resources. The famous Ma Yüan fell ill and died on such a campaign in A.D. 49.[126]

On the southwest border, the situation was complicated by an additional factor. On the one hand, the pattern of tribal unrest was the same. On the other, a number of aboriginal tribes beyond the border voluntarily submitted and accepted a loose Chinese overlordship. A tribe of the Ai-lao, who may have been a Thai-speaking people, surrendered with their king at the Yunnan border in A.D. 51. The Chinese officials counted them in traditional fashion and arrived at the figures of 2,770 households and 17,659 individuals. In 69, another Ai-lao prince submitted with 51,890 households and 553,711 individuals.[127] Similar cases are recorded for tribes and Tibetans on the border of Szechwan.

These surrenders were undoubtedly stimulated by commercial traffic along a route corresponding with the "Burma Road." Throughout Later Han, trade missions, which the Chinese government interpreted as tribute missions, arrived from Burma and India by that route. Such official trade must have been greatly outstripped by private trade, which flowed in and out of China on the same, and gradually improved, road. Persistent legend had it that the first suspension bridge across the Mekong was built in the reign of Ming-ti (A.D. 57–75).[128] Merchants dealt in luxury articles and made profits along the way by selling these to the tribes and their chiefs. To gain easier access to such goods, and also to appease their growing appetite for gifts by Chinese authorities, some chiefs were willing to submit.

The Chinese officials accepting the submissions knew that the Ai-lao had to be counted, and they also knew that this traditionally meant an enumeration of households and individuals. The Ai-lao had no households in

126 *HHS* 24, p. 844. 127 *HHS* 86, p. 2849; Chapter 6 below, pp. 459f.

128 The first realization of the possibilities of trade with the southwest appears in connection with T'ang Meng and Chang Ch'ien (*HS* 61, p. 2689 [Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 211]; and Chapter 6 below, pp. 457f.). For references to the suspension bridge, see Needham, *Science and civilisation*, Vol. IV, Part 3, pp. 196–97.

the Chinese sense, so that the officials must have improvised by selecting some other tribal unit. This explains why the number of members per "household" in the A.D. 69 enumeration was 10.7, whereas the Chinese average fluctuated around 5. This must also be the reason why in the census of A.D. 140 western Yunnan had an average of 8.2 members per household. The figure reflects a mixed Chinese–Ai-lao population, with a majority of the latter.

The admission of the Ai-lao proved a mistake, considering that the Chinese had been unable to destroy aboriginal tribal organizations in the southwest. It would have been better to concentrate their efforts on a gradual, long-range sinification of the area. To accept large numbers of additional tribal peoples strengthened the aboriginals and strained Chinese authority. The foreign element in Yunnan was undoubtedly further increased by clandestine infiltration across the border. With their high degree of autonomy, the aboriginals could turn against their overlords and eventually they did. In the eighth century A.D., the aboriginal state of Nan-chao came into existence and then maintained its independence until the thirteenth century. Its ruling tribe claimed direct descent from the Ai-lao.[129]

The great Later Han migration did not lead to a permanent, dense colonization of southern China or to real population growth. After the fall of the Later Han, the successor dynasties of the south had firm control over no more than areas adjacent to their capital and could not protect the Chinese settlers elsewhere within their nominal domains. Chinese colonization collapsed.

Population growth in Han China was retarded by a number of factors. Agricultural techniques, hygiene, and medicine were primitive in all parts of the country. Of greater importance, the crop yield in northern China was low; farmers could not support large families, and so resorted to infanticide. The sources leave no doubt that infanticide was a common practice. Abandonment of unwanted children, especially girls, meant a concomitant reduction in the birth rate. In southern China the situation was very different. Rice can feed large families, since this crop has a high yield, and the cultivation of it requires many workers. Small families were therefore an economic disadvantage in the south. If the Later Han migration had been sustained and the demographic point of gravity had shifted to the south, national population growth in China might have begun in the third century A.D. But with the collapse of colonization, the point of gravity stayed in the north for another half a millennium, and the factors which had there retarded population growth remained in operation. This explains

129 For Nan-chao, see *Cambridge history of China*, ed. Denis Twitchett, Vol. III (Cambridge, 1979), p. 444.

why the national totals continued to fluctuate around the 50 million level. Only when the great T'ang migration of the seventh and eighth centuries had brought a giant new wave of Chinese settlers into the south did that region become permanently dominant in population. Real population growth began, accelerated by the introduction of new agricultural staples, in particular early ripening rice in the Sung and Ming periods. By A.D. 1100, the population of China had doubled to 100 million. By the early thirteenth century, it had reached 110 to 120 million. And the relentless increase has continued ever since.[130]

Political factions

The main dividing line in Han China was between rulers and ruled, between the educated gentry from which the officials were drawn and the peasant who could not read and write. The ruling class, however, was neither closed nor unchanging. The Han was a fairly open society. Some clans managed to remain influential over a long period, but the majority did not. Consort families gained spectacular power for limited periods; yet when their downfall came, it was swift. Great gentry clans, always relatively few, owned large tracts of land, and were socially and at times politically important on the national level. The clans of the lesser gentry, which merged at its lower levels with the rich peasantry, were not as wealthy and prominent, but wielded considerable local power and had the resources to educate sons and to supply officials. And the boundaries between all categories were ill-defined and could be crossed.

The founder of the Former Han, Kao-ti (r. 202–195 B.C.), had risen to power aided by eighteen chief followers. As long as these were alive, they received the highest offices in the nation. No less than eight of them became chancellors. But after their deaths, the influence of the first families declined rapidly. None of the Former Han empresses, none of the regents, and only two husbands of the thirteen imperial princesses came from the clans of the chief followers. Although these clans may have retained economic power and social prestige, they ceased to belong to the national political elite, and the vacuum they left behind had to be filled by others. New clans provided officials in steady rotation until the Wang clan rose to power and brought the dynasty to an end.

If neither civil service nor consort clans were able to maintain themselves

130 For these inferences and conclusions, see Bielenstein, "Census," pp. 145f.; and Hans Bielenstein's review of Michel Cartier and Pierre-Étienne Will, "Démographie et institutions en Chine: contribution à l'analyse des recensements de l'époque impériale (2 ap. J. C.–1750)," *TP*, 61: 1–3 (1975), 181–85.

as a permanent and exclusive national elite throughout the Former Han, the reign of Wang Mang contributed further to social mobility. He selected the chief ministers from his own party, so that new clans came to the fore. These in turn were swept away with his fall. The Later Han dynasty, in spite of its name, was not a restoration of the old social order. Among the Former Han clans worthy of the ancient historian's notice, only some twenty or so reappear during the Later Han, and of these less than half were really eminent. The reason is that new men rose with Kuang-wu-ti to wealth and national influence.

The great gentry clans of Nan-yang had thrown their support to the Keng-shih emperor, once the candidacy of Liu Po-sheng had failed. They were not willing to reconsider this allegiance until it had become quite clear that their man would be defeated. It was more advantageous to belong to the inner circle around one pretender than to shift prematurely to the outer circle around another. The future Kuang-wu-ti had been of little consequence as long as his brother Po-sheng was alive, and after Po-sheng's execution Kuang-wu-ti was tainted by the relationship and not in a position to attract a great following. Even after Kuang-wu-ti had made himself independent on the northern plain, he was hardly the obvious man to unify the empire. This is the reason why all his early supporters came from the lesser gentry. Such men had little hope of ever belonging to an inner circle unless they rallied around a minor candidate, and this man, thanks to their efforts, eventually was victorious.

In other words, the members of the lesser gentry picked Kuang-wu-ti as their candidate just as much as he picked them as his followers. It was they who persuaded him to ascend the throne, and who advised against policies which might have endangered that goal. Their fortunes had been hitched to those of Kuang-wu-ti, and they were even unwilling to disband when, on one occasion in early A.D. 25, he was feared killed in battle. Rather than giving up the advantage of belonging to an inner circle, the followers agreed to replace Kuang-wu-ti with a young nephew. To everyone's relief, he soon reappeared unscathed.[131] It is significant that the great gentry clans of Nan-yang joined Kuang-wu-ti's cause only after he had ascended the throne and their own emperor had failed. With this realignment, Kuang-wu-ti's party was fully formed except for two men who somewhat later sided with him from positions of great strength.

One of these was the later famous general Ma Yüan, a northwesterner with a large regional following. When he joined Kuang-wu-ti in A.D. 28, he made this ruthlessly frank statement: "In present times, it is not only

131 *HHS* 1A, p. 19.

the sovereign who selects his subjects. The subjects also select their sovereign."[132] Kuang-wu-ti did not object to such candor, since Ma Yüan's allegiance was essential. The other powerful man was Tou Jung, another northwesterner. He had from A.D. 24 onward become warlord of the Kansu corridor, and recognized Kuang-wu-ti in 29. The emperor wrote him with complete frankness that in the current military situation in western China, "the weight of the balance rests with you, general."[133] Tou Jung pledged support in his reply and reminded the emperor that he was a distaff relative. A woman of his clan had been the consort of Wen-ti, and her brother was Tou Jung's ancestor. In A.D. 30, Kuang-wu-ti made Tou Jung the flattering gift of chapters from the *Shih-chi* devoted to the Tou clan and the descendants of the empress née Tou.[134]

While most of Kuang-wu-ti's thirty-five chief followers came from the lesser gentry, they ceased to belong to it with the victory of their champion. Through a combination of luck, foresight, and genuine ability, they had risen beyond normal expectations into the ranks of the great gentry. How well did they and their descendants do in the Later Han political and social order?

Kuang-wu-ti did not lean as heavily on his closest followers in filling the highest offices of state as the founder of the Former Han had done. The political situation was different. Kao-ti had risen to power surrounded by a single faction, whereas Kuang-wu-ti was forced to recognize several interest groups. But the first families of the Later Han were much more successful in subsequent generations than their Former Han counterparts. Not only was the number of officeholders, in proportion to those of the first generation, higher, but some achieved spectacular fortune by supplying empresses, regents, and husbands of imperial princesses.

The first families which were able to maintain their political and social power the longest were exactly those whose girls became empresses and whose boys married imperial princesses. These relatives of imperial consorts were not, as has been claimed, parvenus and nouveaux riches. They did not rise thanks to the lucky and unexpected event that a woman of their house happened to become empress. On the contrary, the selection of Later Han empresses was a weighty political and social affair, and the empresses were normally chosen from clans that were already wealthy, powerful, and socially impeccable. Political power influenced imperial marriage policy, and these marriages gained even greater power for the leading clans. But precisely because imperial marriages were a political matter, the eventual

132 *HHS* 24, p. 830. 133 *HHS* 23, pp. 798–99.
134 *HHS* 23, p. 803. The empress Tou had been the mother of Ching-ti.

downfall of consort families was sudden and brutal. If lucky, they were temporarily eclipsed; if unlucky, they were permanently wiped out. This was due to the intense factional struggle so typical of the Later Han. It can be said with some justice that the political history of this period is in large measure a history of its factions.

Kuang-wu-ti's personal party eventually came to consist of several factions which emerged one by one as his star rose. The first formed in A.D. 23, when he received an independent command and operated in Ying-ch'uan. This commandery bordered on his home commandery, Nan-yang, in the northeast. It was in Ying-ch'uan that the first members of the lesser gentry threw in their lot with him, and it is not surprising that these initially outnumbered his followers from Nan-yang.[135] In 24, Kuang-wu-ti's reputation grew thanks to his victories on the northern plain. His countrymen from Nan-yang discovered his existence and began to ally themselves with him, while the contingent from Ying-ch'uan ceased to expand. This means that by the time Kuang-wu-ti ascended the throne on 5 August A.D. 25, two factions existed among his chief followers, those of Nan-yang and Ying-ch'uan. The former was by far the more important one not only because it was larger, but because, representing his home commandery, it had the emperor's ear.

When Ma Yüan joined Kuang-wu-ti in A.D. 28, he brought with him the support of his regional faction in the Wei River valley. Tou Jung, having recognized Kuang-wu-ti in A.D. 29, arrived triumphantly in Lo-yang in 36. He headed another large regional faction, whose home area overlapped with that of Ma Yüan's followers. Since the Ying-ch'uan faction had meanwhile dissolved, it follows that as of A.D. 36, three major interest groups struggled for influence at Kuang-wu-ti's court: the Nan-yang faction, which was the most powerful; the Ma faction; and the Tou faction. All were regional in origin, and all were rivals. Antagonism was exceptionally strong between the Ma and Tou factions, presumably because of long-standing irritation fostered by geographic proximity.

It is hardly surprising that territories not represented in Kuang-wu-ti's inner circle felt resentment, and this was particularly true for the northern plain. It was there that Kuang-wu-ti had risen to power aided by local gentry clans, but none of the northerners received any of the highest offices after A.D. 25. Although Kuang-wu-ti still needed the allegiance of the northern clans, he permitted himself to be dominated by men from his home commandery. This almost led to an uprising on the northern plain in

135 *HHS* 1A, pp. 5f.; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. III, pp. 48f., Vol. IV, pp. 72f. (For an analysis of the contending factions, see especially Vol. IV, pp. 86f., 97, 107.)

early 26. Something had to be done to mollify the northern gentry. Kuang-wu-ti achieved this by the choice of his first empress. While campaigning in the north during A.D. 24, he had accepted into his harem Kuo Sheng-t'ung from a local great gentry clan which had intermarried with the Former Han imperial house. On 10 July A.D. 26, Kuang-wu-ti enthroned her as his consort, and made her eldest son the heir apparent (see Table 9).[136] This concession satisfied the northern clans, since it opened a direct channel to the emperor through his empress.

With the end of the civil war, Kuang-wu-ti was less dependent on the northern gentry. Pressure was building up to replace Kuo Sheng-t'ung with an empress from Nan-yang, which had the ulterior motive of also changing the heir apparent, since traditionally it was the eldest son of the empress who succeeded to the throne. A change of empress meant a change of heir apparent, provided both women had sons. Conversely, a change of heir apparent was expected to lead to the enthronement of his mother. If Kuang-wu-ti's successor were a native of Nan-yang on both his father's and his mother's side, the faction of that commandery would be accordingly strengthened. Kuang-wu-ti was reluctant to bow to these demands, but finally consented. On 1 December A.D. 41, he divorced Kuo Sheng-t'ung and replaced her with Yin Li-hua from a great gentry clan in Nan-yang. She had been born in A.D. 5, and had entered his harem in 23.[137]

The sources describe the event entirely in personal terms, claiming that the empress née Kuo had become resentful and disobedient, whereas Yin Li-hua was gentle, good, and Kuang-wu-ti's true love. In reality, the emperor obviously was fond of both women, since he had five sons by each of them. Moreover, Yin Li-hua was by A.D. 41 a middle-aged woman. The real cause for the divorce was politics, and Kuang-wu-ti seems to have regretted its necessity. Kuo Sheng-t'ung was the only one of the Later Han empresses who was divorced and who was not imprisoned. She was permitted to live peacefully in the Northern Palace of Lo-yang until her death on July 22, 52. The emperor even hesitated to change his heir apparent, and it was only on August 20, 43, that Kuo Sheng-t'ung's eldest son was demoted to king and replaced as heir apparent by Yin Li-hua's eldest son, Liu Yang. The latter's tabooed personal name was on the same occasion changed to the more unusual Chuang.[138] This was the future Ming-ti.

While the men from Nan-yang were unassailable in their power, a heated contest between the Ma and Tou factions was unavoidable. The former had gained an initial advantage by entrenching itself for several

136 *HHS* 1A, p. 30; *HHS* 10A, p. 402.
137 *HHS* 1B, p. 68; *HHS* 10A, pp. 403, 405f.; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. IV, pp. 114f.
138 *HHS* 1B, p. 71.

years at the court before the Tou faction had made its physical appearance. But soon the two were fairly evenly matched. Tou Jung's followers provided slightly more officials for high civilian posts. The Ma faction was more powerful in military affairs. Ma Yüan himself reaped honors in campaigns against the Tibetans and against the tribes in the far south.

When in A.D. 48 an exceedingly violent uprising of aboriginals broke out in Wu-ling commandery (northwestern Hunan), Ma Yüan volunteered to command the campaign.[139] The Tou faction used this opportunity to have several of its members appointed to Ma Yüan's staff, where they could sabotage his efforts. One of them wrote to his brother in the capital that Ma Yüan was incompetent. The letter was shown to the emperor, who ordered an investigation. When Ma Yüan died of fever in the following year, after having brought the operation to a victorious conclusion, the attacks on him accelerated. One memorial after the other defamed Ma Yüan and denounced him for corruption. The result, as intended, was the fall of the Ma faction. Ma Yüan was posthumously demoted from marquis to commoner, and his family did not even dare to bury him in the ancestral plot. His widow, children, and nephew had an audience with the emperor, asked for a pardon, and were refused. Only after six memorials were they permitted to give Ma Yüan a proper burial.[140]

The Ma clan, in desperation, went so far as to consider joining the Tou faction. As a last alternative, the nephew wrote still another memorial in A.D. 52, offering Ma Yüan's three daughters for any harem of the imperial house. One was fifteen, one fourteen, and one thirteen. He estimated that they qualified for one of the two top grades, and requested an examination by a physiognomist. The emperor approved the memorial and Ma Yüan's youngest daughter was accepted into the harem of the heir apparent.[141] Kuang-wu-ti may have come to realize that Ma Yüan had been treated unfairly. Being an accomplished politician, he had probably also discovered that two factions are harder to manage than three. When he died on 29 March A.D. 57 and was succeeded by Ming-ti, the two strongest factions at court were still the Nan-yang and Tou, but the Ma faction once more was in the ascendancy.

Factions after Kuang-wu-ti

After Kuang-wu-ti's death, factions continued to contest each other on various levels of the bureaucracy, with none being more than temporarily

139 *HHS* 1B, p. 76; *HHS* 24, p. 842; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. III, p. 69, Vol. IV, p. 112.
140 *HHS* 10A, p. 408; *HHS* 24, pp. 843f., 846. 141 *HHS* 10A, p. 408.

successful. Simultaneously the history of great factions becomes synonymous with that of the consort families and their allies.[142] The elevations and divorces of empresses were wholly motivated by politics, even though the sources prefer to explain them in personal terms.

Ming-ti (r. 58–75) chose as his empress the daugher of Ma Yüan, and her enthronement (A.D. 60) restored the fortunes of her clan for the time being.[143] This was a setback for the Tou clan, some of whose members were executed or dismissed from office. But Ming-ti had no children by his consort, his nine sons all being born to other women. This gave him a free hand in appointing the heir apparent.

It cannot have been an accident that he decided on his fifth son, born of Lady Chia (who held the rank of honorable lady). Not only was this concubine a native of Nan-yang, she was also a first cousin of the Empress Ma, their mothers being sisters. Under normal circumstances, Lady Chia would have become the empress, but undoubtedly the two cousins and their clans had reached a modus vivendi whereby the matter would not be pressed. This can be deduced from the fact that the name of the heir apparent was announced on the same day that Empress Ma was enthroned, 8 April A.D. 60. The two ladies cooperated to share the honors at the expense of the other imperial concubines and their sons. It was furthermore the Empress Ma who brought up the heir apparent, so that he came to look on her relatives as though they were his own.[144]

When Chang-ti (r. A.D. 75–88) succeeded his father on 5 September A.D. 75, the pendulum swung the other way. Two sisters of the Tou clan were accepted into his harem in 77. Not only were they great-granddaughters of Tou Jung, but also, through their mother, of Kuang-wu-ti. The older of the sisters became Chang-ti's consort on 2 April A.D. 78. Even though the sources claim that the still living empress dowager Ma was impressed by the new consort, she must have deplored the choice and feared what it meant for her own faction. This can be concluded from the following dynastic events. Chang-ti had eight sons. None was by the empress, and some were as yet unborn at the time under discussion. On 23 May A.D. 79 the third son was installed as heir apparent. This was Liu Ch'ing, whose maternal descent is significant. When her husband was still alive, Empress Ma had personally selected two sisters of the Sung clan for the harem of the future Chang-ti. Both became honorable ladies when Chang-ti ascended the throne. The older gave birth to Liu Ch'ing in A.D. 78.[145]

142 Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. IV, pp. 122f.; Ch'ü T'ung-tsu, *Han social structure*, ed. Jack L. Dull (Seattle and London, 1972), pp. 210f. 143 *HHS* 10A, p. 409; *HHS* 24, p. 851.
144 *HHS* 2, p. 106; *HHS* 3, p. 129; *HHS* 10A, p. 409.
145 *HHS* 3, pp. 136–37; *HHS* 10A, pp. 411f.; *HHS* 55, pp. 1799f.

As it happens, not only were the Sung sisters, as the personal protégées of Empress Ma, under a special obligation to her, they also were granddaughters of a sister of her own maternal grandmother. This means that the Ma faction had acted with foresight, and that the selection of the heir apparent was intended to balance and, in the long run, to outweigh the choice of the empress. But the death of the empress dowager Ma one year later, on 16 August A.D. 79, changed the political climate. The enmity between the Tou and Ma factions persisted, and Empress Tou succeeded in engineering the downfall of the heir apparent. On 1 August A.D. 82 he was demoted to king and replaced by Chang-ti's fourth son. The Sung sisters were sent to the prison hospital, (*pu shih*) where they drank poison and died.[146] With these upheavals, the Ma clan lost its national importance. The struggle between the Tou and Ma clans had raged over the heads of the two young princes. They remained, in fact, close friends throughout their lives.

The choice of the new heir apparent, the future Ho-ti (r. A.D. 88–106), had once more been carefully planned. His mother was a Liang, an important clan of the northwest. Her grandfather, Liang T'ung, had been one of the most prominent supporters of Tou Jung during the civil war, which made him an indirect follower of Kuang-wu-ti. This emperor had rewarded him with a marquisate, but Liang T'ung's career had not been spectacular.[147] The influence of the Liang clan continued to depend on its affiliation with the Tou clan, and it had cooperated in the defamation of Ma Yüan. Together with the Tou, it had suffered a setback during the reign of Ming-ti, and sons of Liang T'ung had been executed or exiled. The fortunes of the Liang improved, when in A.D. 77 two of its women – they were sisters – entered the harem of Chang-ti. Both were made honorable ladies. The elder of the two gave birth to a son in 79, and it was he who in 82 became heir apparent on the instigation of Empress Tou.[148]

Her motive is fairly obvious. Just as the childless Empress Ma had reached an agreement with Lady Chia and her clan in the time of Ming-ti, Empress Tou must have planned to work out a similar solution with the Liang. Had they not been close allies in the past? It looks as though the Liang initially acquiesced, since the two honorable ladies were not molested, and the sources state that the new heir apparent was brought up by the empress herself. But the allies soon fell out, the Liang presumably being discontented with a secondary role. The Tou proved the stronger, and in A.D. 83 brought about the temporary downfall of the Liang. The two sisters perished, perhaps by their own hands; their father was executed;

146 *HHS* 3, p. 142. For the function of the *Pu-shih* (Drying House), see Chapter 8 below, p. 501.
147 *HHS* 10A, 416. For Liang T'ung, see *HHS* 34, pp. 1165f.
148 *HHS* 4, p. 165; *HHS* 10A, p. 412.

and their relatives were exiled to what is now northern Vietnam. The Liang clan was not rehabilitated until after the death of Empress Dowager Tou in A.D. 97.[149] Henceforth independent of the Tou, the Liang clan gradually came to build the most powerful of all the factions in Later Han China.

With the death of Chang-ti and the enthronement of Ho-ti on April 9, A.D. 88, a new element was added to the political equation. As did all surviving empresses, the widow of the late ruler became the empress dowager. The novelty was that for the first time in Later Han the ruler was under age, so that, in accordance with tradition, the empress dowager Tou had to take over the government on his behalf. As was customary but not mandatory in such situations, the empress dowager delegated some but not all of her power to a close male relative. Tou Hsien was the eldest of her brothers and, in spite of tensions between them, gradually became her most influential adviser. It was he who conducted the victorious campaign against the northern Hsiung-nu in A.D. 89. On his return that year, he was appointed general-in-chief (*ta chiang-chün*) on 29 October.[150] That is the title which from this occasion onward was granted to the Later Han regents. The revival of the institution was accidental, depending on the fact that a minor was on the throne. It henceforth became a recurrent ingredient in Later Han government. From 29 October A.D. 89 until 22 September 189, when the last one was killed, seven regents were appointed, and they influenced public affairs for thirty-seven years in all.

In the summer of A.D. 90, Tou Hsien left the capital again to oversee mopping-up operations against the northern Hsiung-nu. By the time he returned on 11 June A.D. 92, the Tou faction had played out its role, and only weeks remained before its fall. Ho-ti had been "capped" (reached his majority), on 25 February A.D. 91, and had decided to rid himself of the Tou. He laid his plans carefully with the aid of a eunuch, the regular palace attendant (*chung ch'ang-shih*) Cheng Chung, and then bided his time until Tou Hsien was back in the capital and under the control of the court. On 14 August A.D. 92 Tou Hsien was stripped of his rank as regent and accused of having planned to murder the emperor. This charge may well have been a cliché, and so trumped up. Shortly thereafter, Tou Hsien and his three brothers killed themselves. Supporters of the Tou faction were executed, including the historian Pan Ku, or exiled to southern Kwangtung. Survivors of the Tou clan were pardoned only in A.D. 109. But the empress dowager Tou was not harmed, and died a natural death on 18 October A.D. 97.[151]

149 *HHS* 4, p. 184; *HHS* 10A, pp. 416f; *HHS* 34, p. 1172.
150 *HHS* 4, p. 168; *HHS* 23, pp. 812f.
151 *HHS* 4, pp. 171, 173, 184; *HHS* 23, p. 819; *HHS* 40B, pp. 1385–86.

With Ho-ti's reign, the northwestern clans ceased to provide imperial consorts for the first time in forty years. Both his empresses came from Nan-yang. The first, who was enthroned in A.D. 96, belonged to the same great Yin clan from which Kuang-wu-ti's second empress had sprung, and was the great-granddaughter of that lady's eldest brother. She was childless. On 24 July A.D. 102 the empress was divorced and imprisoned in the palace jail. She died there, probably by her own hand. Empress Yin had been denounced for witchcraft, but the real reason for the divorce was another political upheaval in which her clan was overthrown. The father of the ex-empress killed himself; other relatives were executed or banished to Vietnam. Although the members of the Yin clan received a pardon in A.D. 110 and were given back their property, they did not regain their national importance.[152]

One of Kuang-wu-ti's most important followers had been a fellow native of Nan-yang by the name of Teng Yü. His granddaughter Teng Sui was born in A.D. 81, and entered Ho-ti's harem in 96. On 21 November 102, she became his second consort. Empress Teng was also childless. When her husband died on 13 February A.D. 106, he left behind two sons by unknown mothers. Information on the names and fates of the women was probably suppressed by the Teng clan. Neither of the sons had been appointed heir apparent, which meant that the empress dowager, usually in consultation with high officials, was entitled to decide the dynastic succession. The elder son was bypassed, supposedly because he suffered from chronic disease, and the younger, who was only a hundred-odd days old, was enthroned. The younger may have been chosen precisely because as the younger he would allow the empress dowager a longer stay in power. The probability is strong that Teng Sui had manipulated and continued to manipulate the imperial succession.[153]

The newly-enthroned child, Shang-ti, died within months, on 21 September A.D. 106, and once more the empress dowager had to solve a dynastic crisis. Numerous sons and grandsons of Chang-ti were alive, including Liu Ch'ing, who had briefly been heir apparent from A.D. 79 to 82, so an adult emperor could have been elected with ease. Instead, a young son of Liu Ch'ing, born in A.D. 94, was chosen and enthroned on 23 September A.D. 106. This was An-ti. Even after he had been capped on 26 February A.D. 109, Empress Dowager Teng continued to dominate the government. She made use of her brothers but did not depend on them, and she avoided the appointment of a regent except for a very short time. Her eldest brother, Teng Chih, held that position from 18 January A.D.

152 *HHS* 4, pp. 181, 190; *HHS* 10A, p. 417. 153 *HHS* 4, pp. 194f.; *HHS* 10A, pp. 418f.

109 until November of the following year.[154] The long stay in power of the empress dowager Teng antagonized many, including An-ti, and after she died on 17 April A.D. 121, the downfall of her clan was swift. On 3 June of the same year, the members of the Teng faction were dismissed from office, demoted to commoners, and exiled in the usual manner. Among the many suicides was the former regent Teng Chih. The eclipse of the Teng was dark but brief; Shun-ti reinstated it on his accession to the throne in A.D. 125.[155]

An-ti had only one empress, whose name was Yen Chi. With her selection, the previous pattern was broken. She was neither from Nan-yang nor from the northwest, and although two women of her clan had previously been honorable ladies, Yen Chi did not belong to one of the great Chinese clans. She was enthroned on 1 June A.D. 115, at a time when Empress Dowager Teng was in power. That must be significant. Teng Sui did not wish to have her power challenged by a consort from an influential clan, and this had dictated the selection. But once the empress dowager had died (A.D. 121), nothing prevented the rise of the Yen faction.

Empress Yen was childless, whereas An-ti in A.D. 115 had a son by an honorable lady named Li. Fearing for her position, the empress had Lady Li poisoned soon after the birth of the boy.[156] An-ti realized the growing power of the Yen clan, but was a weak man who did not wish to play an active role himself. On 6 September A.D. 124 he appointed as regent a certain Keng Pao.[157] He was the brother of the principal wife of An-ti's father, and belonged to a powerful northwestern clan which had supported the founder of the dynasty. His regency was undoubtedly intended to counteract the influence of the Yen faction.

An-ti's only son had been made heir apparent on 25 May A.D. 120. On 5 October A.D. 124, the emperor gave in to pressure from the Yen faction and took the unusual step of demoting him to king.[158] This left An-ti without an heir, and reaction was vehement. Some twenty high officials protested at a palace gate, but failed to bring about a reversal of the decision. When An-ti died on 30 April A.D. 125, without having selected an heir from another imperial line, the empress dowager née Yen was free to make her own decision. Her clan had reached the pinnacle of power, and must have looked forward to staying there for a long time.

The empress dowager held lengthy discussions with her brother in the palace. Among the descendants of Chang-ti many suitable candidates were available, but these had the disadvantage from the Yen faction's point of

154 *HHS* 4, p. 199; *HHS* 5, pp. 203, 211, 216; *HHS* 16, pp. 612f. 155 *HHS* 16, pp. 616–17.
156 *HHS* 5, pp. 222, 231; *HHS* 6, p. 249; *HHS* 10B, p. 435. 157 *HHS* 5, p. 240.
158 *HHS*, 5 p. 240; *HHS* 15, pp. 591f.; Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," p. 91.

view that they were adult. The choice finally fell on a grandson of Chang-ti, whose age is not given. Since his posthumous name means "young," he must have been a child. The enthronement took place on 18 May A.D. 125. A few days later, on 24 May, the regent Keng Pao was removed from office and killed himself.[159] The Yen faction seemed to be in complete control. It was to fall before the end of the year, simply because the child ruler died on 10 December. Later he was not even counted among the legitimate emperors of the dynasty.

Once more the Yen clan attempted to manipulate the succession, but in the midst of the deliberations a coup took place. Among the eunuchs, one group supported the empress dowager Yen, while another was in favor of An-ti's only son. The eunuchs faithful to the boy met secretly with him on 14 December at his place of detention in the Northern Palace of Lo-yang, and bound themselves to each other by oath. On the night of 16 December, the same eunuchs set out, and after a brief victorious fight with opposing eunuchs, freed the prince and proclaimed him ruler of China. This was Shun-ti.[160] He and his party withdrew to the Southern Palace, where orders were given for the arrest of the Yen faction. The majority of the civilian and military officials sided with the new emperor, and by morning of 17 December were in full command of the situation. The surviving members of the Yen faction were in the usual way executed or exiled to Vietnam. The empress dowager was relieved of her imperial seal (stripped of her rank), and sent to a detached palace. She died there on 28 February A.D. 126.[161]

With Shun-ti, the northwest regained its prominence. He had a single empress, Liang Na, drawn from the Liang clan. Her selection was naturally motivated by politics, which also can be seen from the fact that she was about nine years older than her husband. Liang Na was a great-great-granddaughter of Liang T'ung. Two of her grandfather's sisters had been the unfortunate honorable ladies of Chang-ti, one of whom had given birth to the future Ho-ti.[162]

Liang Na had entered the harem of Shun-ti in A.D. 128, and became his consort on 2 March A.D. 132. Relations between the emperor and the Liang clan were excellent, and on 19 May A.D. 135, he appointed Liang Shang, father of his consort, as regent. When Liang Shang died in office on 22 September A.D. 141, he was replaced a few days later, on 28 September, by his eldest son and the emperor's brother-in-law, Liang Chi.[163]

159 *HHS* 5, pp. 241–42; *HHS* 10B, pp. 436f.; Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," p. 91.
160 *HHS* 6, pp. 249f.; *HHS* 78, pp. 2514f.; Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," p. 92.
161 *HHS* 6, p. 252; *HHS* 10B, p. 437.
162 *HHS* 10B, pp. 438f. For Liang T'ung, see p. 281 above.
163 *HHS* 6, pp. 264, 271. For Liang Shang and Liang Chi, see *HHS* 34, pp. 1175f., 1178f.

The empress was childless, Shun-ti's only son being born to Lady Yü in A.D. 143. She was not harmed, perhaps because Shun-ti died relatively soon, on 20 September A.D. 144. With the Liang faction firmly in power, it could permit the next emperor's mother to live in obscurity.[164]

The succession was orderly, since Shun-ti had appointed his son heir apparent on 3 June A.D. 144. But the new child ruler, who was enthroned on 20 September A.D. 144, died a few months later, on 15 February A.D. 145. Once more an empress dowager was to decide on the heir, and could manipulate matters. In consultation with her brother, the regent, it was agreed to choose a great-great-grandson of Chang-ti, born in A.D. 138. Adult candidates were ignored. Chih-ti ascended the throne on 6 March A.D. 145. He died on 26 July A.D. 146, and it was later claimed that he had been murdered by Liang Chi for having called him a bully. Such a charge cannot be proved, and may be part of the stereotyped accusations heaped on Liang Chi after his disgrace.[165]

The empress dowager and the regent followed standard practice, and this time selected a young boy born in A.D. 132. Huan-ti was enthroned on 1 August A.D. 146, and kept firmly under the control of the Liang faction. Even before being capped (26 February A.D. 148), he was, on 30 September A.D. 147, given as consort Liang Nü-ying, a younger sister of the empress dowager, Liang Na. Due to this foresighted political appointment, nothing changed when Liang Na died on 6 April A.D. 150.[166] The Liang faction remained entrenched, and the regent, Liang Chi, dominated the emperor even after the latter had reached majority.

But with the death of Huan-ti's consort, Liang Nü-ying, on 9 August A.D. 159, the regent lost his protector and ally in the palace. Gripped by something like panic, he resorted to the assassination or attempted murder of certain persons he feared. This was the moment when the emperor decided to topple the Liang faction. He had to act with circumspection, since Liang Chi employed some of the eunuchs to spy on him. Having identified the eunuchs he could trust, on 9 September the emperor gave orders for the defense of the palace. A force of somewhat over a thousand men was simultaneously dispatched to surround the residence of the regent. Liang Chi was dismissed from his rank, and killed himself, together with his wife, later that day. His property was confiscated. The members of the faction were rounded up and publicly executed. The Liang clan never recovered from this carnage, and henceforth Huan-ti governed without a regent.[167]

164 *HHS* 6, pp. 274–75; *HHS* 10B, p. 439.

165 *HHS* 6, pp. 276, 282; *HHS* 34, p. 1179.

166 *HHS* 7, pp. 287–96; *HHS* 10B, pp. 440, 443f.

167 *HHS* 7, p. 304; *HHS* 10B, p. 444; *HHS* 34, pp. 1185f.; *HHS* 78, pp. 2520f.; Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," pp. 93f.

Huan-ti was the only Later Han ruler who had three consorts. His second empress, Teng Meng-nü, came from the great clan which had provided one empress already. She was a great-great-granddaughter of Teng Yü, and Ho-ti's consort Teng Sui had been her grandfather's first cousin. With her enthronement on 14 September A.D. 159, it was Nan-yang's turn once more to provide an empress. But although the choice was politically motivated, Teng Meng-nü also was a favorite of the emperor at the time of her elevation. It did not last. The empress was divorced on 27 March A.D. 165, accused of black magic and drunkenness, imprisoned in the palace jail, and ordered to kill herself. Her relatives were executed or demoted, and the Teng clan lost its national importance.[168]

Huan-ti's third consort was Tou Miao, from the northwestern clan, a great-great-great-granddaughter of Tou Jung. Chang-ti's consort had been her grandfather's first cousin. Perhaps she had been chosen as a counterpoint to the fallen Liang faction, which ever since A.D. 83 had been the mortal enemy of her own clan. Tou Miao was enthroned on 10 December A.D. 165. After her husband's death on 25 January A.D. 168, she became the empress dowager, and within days appointed her father, Tou Wu, regent.[169]

Huan-ti had no sons, nor had he designated a successor. Consulting with her father, the empress dowager Tou in the usual fashion passed over adult candidates and chose a great-great-grandson of Chang-ti, born in A.D. 156. This was Ling-ti. Hardly had he been enthroned, on 17 February A.D. 168, when a crisis of unprecedented proportions began to develop.

The role of the eunuchs

The number and power of the eunuchs had been rising slowly and steadily throughout Later Han. Their active political role began in the reign of Ho-ti, when in A.D. 92 the regular palace attendant Cheng Chung assisted the emperor in overthrowing the Tou faction. As a reward, this eunuch was made a marquis in A.D. 102, and when he died in 114, his adopted son was permitted by An-ti to inherit the fief.[170] After the eunuchs had enthroned Shun-ti and liquidated the Yen faction in A.D. 125, their eighteen leaders were all created marquises.[171] Shun-ti showed his gratitude on 18

168 *HHS* 7, pp. 305, 314; *HHS* 10B, p. 444. For Teng Yü, see p. 283 above.

169 *HHS* 7, pp. 316, 320; *HHS* 8, p. 327; *HHS* 10B, p. 445; *HHS* 69, p. 2241.

170 For the place of eunuchs in the institutions of government, see Chapter 8 below, pp. 499f. For their political activities, see Ulrike Jugel, *Politische Funktion und soziale Stellung der Eunuchen zur Späteren Hanzeit* (25–220 *n. Chr.*) (Wiesbaden, 1976). For the gradual growth of their powers and for Cheng Chung, see *HHS* 78, pp. 2509, 2512; and Ch'ü, *Han social structure*, pp. 463f.

171 For these events, see note 160 above; and *HHS* 6, p. 264.

March A.D. 135 by formally granting all eunuchs the right to hand down noble titles and fiefs to adopted sons. Huan-ti could not have rid himself of the Liang faction in A.D. 159 without the eunuchs, and he rewarded their five leaders with marquisates. Throughout his reign, Huan-ti leaned on the eunuchs for advice.

The career officials and candidates for office deeply resented eunuch power, partly because they despised those who had been castrated, and partly for the less noble reason that they wanted influence for themselves. But in spite of their allegations, eunuchs never gained total control. The Han system of government consisted of checks and balances. Policies were made, in cooperation or conflict, by the emperor (or one acting on his behalf), together with the career bureaucracy. In spite of factional struggles among themselves, the majority of eunuchs defended the power of the throne, since their only hope for survival lay in its protection. Their role could not be linked with that of a hostile career bureaucracy. Whether decent, corrupt, or power-hungry, the eunuchs had to act with and for the ruler.

If the eunuchs never had absolute control over the government, but on the contrary helped to preserve the necessary division of authority, this is not to say that that balance was never disturbed. Power ebbed and flowed between the emperor and the bureaucracy, or, at times, between the empress dowager, the regent, and the bureaucracy. It was in reaction to the abuses of the Liang faction that the authority of the throne and the eunuchs was increased at the expense of career officials during the latter half of Huan-ti's reign. This was the situation faced by Tou Wu when he became regent, and he conceived a novel idea of how to cope with it. All regents before him, even Liang Chi, had understood the Han system of government, and had attempted to gain power within its limitations. Tou Wu decided to do away with eunuch influence by the simple device of executing their leaders. If he had been successful, the emperor would have become the captive of the regent, and the traditional way of government would have collapsed in A.D. 168. The victory of the eunuchs preserved it until A.D. 189.

The interests of the regent and the career bureaucracy were not normally identical, but Tou Wu needed wide support for his planned action.[172] He therefore courted the students of the Academy and allied himself with the nominal head of the civil service, the aged and respected grand tutor (*t'ai fu*), Ch'en Fan. Both brought pressure on the empress dowager, but she steadfastly refused to sacrifice the eunuchs. This was not altruism on her

172 See Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," pp. 95f.

part; it was cold necessity as long as she wished to preserve her political freedom, which was identical with that of the throne.

On 24 October A.D. 168, supporters of Tou Wu wrote a memorial indicting the regular palace attendants Ts'ao Chieh and Wang Fu and requesting their arrests.[173] That evening, Tou Wu returned to his headquarters, intending to have the memorial presented to the empress dowager the next morning. His extraordinary carelessness enabled the eunuchs to gain possession of the memorial during the night and to read it. Ts'ao Chieh and Wang Fu immediately took command. The boy emperor was awakened and brought to the main audience hall, a force of guards was assembled for the defense of the palace, and orders went out for the arrest of the regent. Tou Wu refused to surrender. He hurried to the barracks of the Northern Army, which housed professional army units for the protection of the capital, and marched several thousand men to the southern gate of the Northern Palace. When the morning of 25 October dawned, the opposing forces, about equal in strength, faced each other below the gate. But Tou Wu did not attack. His men gradually slipped away, and within a few hours he was deserted and killed himself. The grand tutor, who with a handful of followers had entered the palace through another gate, was captured and executed. The members of the Tou faction were, as usual, put to death or exiled to Vietnam. The empress dowager survived. She was placed under light arrest in the Southern Palace, and died there on 18 July A.D. 172.[174]

With the fall of the Tou faction, the great clans, which had risen to national prominence together with the founder of the dynasty nearly a century and a half previously, had played out their roles. It is significant that the two consorts of Ling-ti (r. A.D. 168–189), although from the northwest and Nan-yang, respectively, came from lower social levels. Empress Sung (d. A.D. 178) belonged to a clan that was distinguished but not as prominent as the Yin, Ma, Tou, Teng, or Liang. Ling-ti's second consort, Empress Ho (d. A.D. 189), was descended from a line of butchers.[175] This cannot be accidental. The choice of the empresses must have been influenced by the eunuchs, who at all costs wished to prevent another confrontation with the old consort families.

After their victory in A.D. 168, the eunuchs were richly rewarded with promotions, gifts, and noble titles. For the entire reign of Ling-ti, they and the power of the throne were secure. It was only with the massacre of more than two thousand eunuchs on 25 September A.D. 189 that the institu-

173 *HHS* 7, p. 319; *HHS* 8, pp. 328–29; *HHS* 10B, p. 446; *HHS* 69, pp. 2241f.; *HHS* 78, pp. 2524f. 174 *HHS* 8, p. 333. 175 *HHS* 8, p. 341; *HHS* 10B, pp. 448f.

tional balance of the Han governmental system was destroyed, and the last emperor became the captive of ambitious generals.[176] The remainder of the dynasty was marked by chaos.

To summarize, Later Han officialdom, like its Former Han counterpart, was divided into factions of regional origin. None had an exclusive and permanent hold on government, so that social mobility was the rule, not the exception, up to the highest levels of the bureaucracy. But when it came to intermarriage with the imperial house, certain clans from Nan-yang and the northwest remained a favored social elite for longer periods of time. These were the Yin and Teng clans from Nan-yang, and the Ma, Tou, and Liang clans from the northwest. Before A.D. 168, they provided nine of the eleven empresses, and five of the six regents. Four of these clans (Yin, Tou, Teng, Liang) even supplied two empresses each. Yet none of them survived in power until the end of the dynasty. Sooner or later, each fell victim to the ruthless power struggle and lost its national importance. This was due to the fact that empresses were chosen for political, not romantic, reasons, which made consort clans vulnerable the moment their women were enthroned. The normal price for such prominence was eventual extinction. The eunuchs formed another component in the political strife, in which, for the sake of their own preservation, they sided with the throne. They acted as the defenders of young, weak, or inexperienced rulers in order to save rhemselves. Their annihilarion spelled the end of rraditional Han government.

176 Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," pp. 98–101; and Chapter 5 below, pp. 341f., 348f.

CHAPTER 4

THE CONDUCT OF GOVERNMENT AND THE ISSUES AT STAKE A.D. 57–167

The preceding chapter has described how the control of political decisions and the exercise of dominant power shifted between different families and factions; the author's observation[1] that the political history of this period is in large measure a history of its factions is borne out all too clearly by the sources. However, the purposes for which those sources were drawn up were such that many of the questions which interest historians today called for little comment at the time. There are therefore no immediate answers to questions such as whether a relationship may be traced between the adoption of different policies of state and the rise of different families or groups to prominence. We do not know how far the interests and landholdings of particular families conflicted with the efficiency of imperial administration or the introduction of economic innovations. Nor can we assess in what ways the practical operation of imperial government varied during the Later Han or how it was affected by the turmoil of factional strife.

Nevertheless, when due allowance is made for bias, the histories still yield some reliable hints regarding the state and stability of government during the decades that followed the death of Kuang-wu-ti in A.D. 57 and preceded the accession of Ling-ti in A.D. 168. The many complaints against oppression or corruption were surely based on more than a grain of truth. There is some evidence of how the exercise of power monopolies affected recruitment to the civil service. The references to the protocol of the court and to the promotion of learning indicate a deliberate display of a devotion to traditional values by some who were at the same time apparently flouting the recognized and approved means of government; and the protests leveled against the extravagance of the imperial family and others are too frequent to be dismissed as being no more than complaints of the envious. Finally, the histories record a series of outbreaks of insurgence during the reigns of Shun-ti (r. A.D. 125–144) and Huan-ti (r. 146–168) that tell their own tale of the breakdown of law and order.

1 See Chapter 3 above, p. 277.

THE REIGNS OF MING-TI AND CHANG-TI (A.D. 57–88)

A general appraisal of these years and the cause of decline is given in one of the essays of Chung-ch'ang T'ung (ca. 180–220), who was writing with the benefit of hindsight during the turbulent years that marked the end of the dynasty.[2] In commenting on the effective removal of political power from the hands of statesmen and officials, he traced the root of the trouble to no less a person than the founding emperor, Kuang-wu-ti (r. A.D. 25–57). The emperor had been angered at the way in which powerful ministers of state in the past had acquired and used power. He had therefore seen to it that, although the senior posts of the three excellencies (*san kung*) were duly established, real government was exercised by the secretariat. Authority was in fact transferred to members of the consorts' families, although there were many who enjoyed the favors of the privileged.[3] In this way private followings had been built up both in the capital city and in the provinces. Appointments to office were made without regard of merit, often even by purchase, and while the border areas had come under the control of weaklings, the civil population had been placed at the mercy of greedy oppressors.

The resulting disaffection and disorders had been brought about by those who served the consorts' families and the eunuchs, and it was a crying scandal that the blame had been fastened on the three excellencies. Subsequently, in Chung-ch'ang T'ung's view, those chosen to hold the positions of the three excellencies had been cautious mediocrities, quite unfit for such high office. By his own time the situation had become far worse than it had been under Kuang-wu-ti, who had contented himself with removing the authority of those three senior statesmen of the empire.

There are signs that during the second half of the first century A.D., and even earlier, the administration of the restored Han government had been oppressive and over-rigorous. Ti-wu Lun, who had been appointed minister of works (*ssu-k'ung*) in A.D. 75, made this clear in a memorial that he shortly submitted to the new emperor, possibly by way of admonition.[4] He observed that Kuang-wu-ti had inherited the chaotic situation left behind by Wang Mang, and that he had been inclined to

2 See *Hou-Han shu* 49, pp. 1657f.; and Étienne Balazs, "Political philosophy and social crisis at the end of the Han dynasty," in his *Chinese civilization and bureaucracy: Variations on a theme* (New Haven and London, 1964), pp. 218f., for an extract from Chung-ch'ang T'ung's *Ch'ang-yen* (Frank remarks).

3 For comments on the historical accuracy of imputing this change to Kuang-wu-ti's reign, see the notes in Wang Hsien-ch'ien, *Hou-Han shu chi-chieh* (Ch'ang-sha, 1915; rpt. Taipei, 1955) 49, pp. 19a-20a. For Kuang-wu-ti's actual failure to achieve these ends, see Hans Bielenstein, *The restoration of the Han dynasty* Vol. IV, *BMFEA*, 51 (1979), pp. 53–71.

4 *HHS* 41, p. 1400; *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien* 46, p. 1482, dates this in A.D. 77. For Ti-wu Lun's appointment as minister of works, see *HHS* 3, p. 130.

conduct his government in a strict, even ferocious, style. His successors had followed his example, and this type of government had become customary. Ti-wu Lun complained of the severity practiced by officials in his own time and entered a plea for a more considerate and generous treatment of the public by officials.

These criticisms may not have been altogether unjustified, as may be seen from other protests that were raised at the time and that have survived in the histories. Chung-li I, who had been appointed to the secretariat shortly after Ming-ti's accession in 57, had earlier in his career made a name for himself during an epidemic that had broken out in his native commandery of K'uai-chi, causing many deaths (A.D. 38). He had personally provided medicines and thus saved many lives. In A.D. 60 Chung-li I protested to Ming-ti against the extravagant use of labor in building the Northern Palace, and as a result all work except for those projects that required urgent attention was suspended.[5] It will be seen below that protests against royal extravagance often accompanied those against oppressive behavior.

Ming-ti is described as having been narrow-minded, with a penchant for revealing confidential information.[6] As a result, his senior officials frequently found themselves the victims of slander; even some of those who were closest to the throne were victimized in this way. On one occasion the emperor's anger was such that he struck one of his attendants with his stick. An atmosphere of fear thus prevailed at court, where everyone vied with his rivals in the rigorous implementation of government orders so as to avoid incurring punishments themselves. Chung-li I was bold enough to protest against the atmosphere of oppression and to plead that the emperor should encourage officials to be less severe in the punishments that they ordered. Although Ming-ti was unwilling to accept the advice, he realized that it was valid enough. Chung-li I was, however, removed from his position at the capital.

Reference has been made to the charge that was lodged against Liu Ying and the implication of several thousand persons who were suspected of being his adherents (A.D. 70–77).[7] We are specifically informed that over half of some five hundred officials who were imprisoned died by flogging. Of a few named officials who survived this ordeal with indomitable courage, and without giving way under torture, Lu Hsü finally broke down, to the astonishment of his jailers. He explained the reason; from the way that a meal that was delivered to him had been prepared he had recognized that

5 *HHS* 31, pp. 1406f.; Hans Bielenstein, "Lo-yang in Later Han times," *BMFEA*, 48 (1976), 33.
6 *HHS* 41, p. 1409. 7 See Chapter 3 above, p. 258.

it could only have come from his mother's hand. But he had had no opportunity to meet her after the long journey that she had undertaken from south of the Yangtze River. The incident moved the emperor to pity and Lu Hsü was freed from prison – with, however, a ban on his holding further office.[8]

Shortly after the accession of Chang-ti in A.D. 76, we are told that the administration of the officials was just as harsh as it had been previously. Ch'en Ch'ung, a member of the secretariat, took the opportunity to enter a plea for clemency and the mitigation of punishments; he also complained that officials were exploiting their public positions to advance their private interests.[9] This protest seems to have made some impression, but it was not until 84 that an edict was promulgated ordering a mitigation of the floggings used during the investigation of criminal cases.[10]

There is also some evidence to show that officials in the provinces were unduly oppressive, as is revealed in a statement attributed to Tsung Chün at a time when he was governor of Chiu-chiang commandery.[11] Later in his career he was appointed director of the secretariat, and according to one report he is said to have deplored the way in which civil officials were open to deception and flattery, and the limited way in which the rare examples of officials of integrity brought benefit to the general population.[12]

There are signs that some attention was being paid at this time to the selection or promotion of officials on the basis of their merit or integrity rather than by virtue of their personal connections. In one incident Ming-ti is said to have refused an appointment which one of the princesses (a daughter of Kuang-wu-ti) requested for her son, on the grounds that it was essential to put the right sort of person in office if popular distress was to be avoided.[13]

Ti-wu Lun, who rose to be minister of works in 75, is noted in the histories as a prime example of a high official who scrupulously refused to exploit his position to further his own interests. Earlier in his career he had served as governor of Shu commandery. This was a very fertile area, where local officials could amass considerable fortunes. However, Ti-wu Lun was particularly careful to recommend for office candidates who, however poor they might be, were honest. Corruption was thus stamped out. Many of the men Ti-wu Lun recommended rose to the highest positions in the civil service, and he was acknowledged by his contemporaries to be a good judge of character.[14] That such

8 *HHS* 81, pp. 2682f. 9 *HHS* 46, p. 1549.
10 *HHS* 3, p. 146; A. F. P. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han law* (Leiden, 1955), p. 76.
11 See *HHS* 41, pp. 1412f., where the name is given as Sung Chün. For the correction to Tsung Chün, see *HHSCC* 41, f. 13b-14a, notes; and *TCTC* 45, p. 1445. Tsung Chün had been posted to Chiu-chiang at some time toward the end of Kuang-wu-ti's reign.
12 *TCTC* 45, pp. 1445–46. 13 *HHS* 2, p. 124. 14 *HHS* 41, pp. 1398, 1401–02.

examples are recorded as exceptional suggests that in normal cases appointments may have depended on very different considerations.

During the Former Han period, the question had sometimes arisen of the style of living best suited to the emperor. During Wu-ti's reign (141–87 B.C.), life in the palace had been notoriously luxurious and ostentatious, partly with the deliberate intention of impressing foreign visitors with the wealth and power of the Han. Later on there had been a call to reduce palace expenditure, and a number of economies had been effected, particularly during the reign of Yüan-ti (49–33 B.C.).[15] But of all the emperors of Former Han, it had been Wen-ti (r. 180–157 B.C.) who had been singled out for praise for his desire to spare his people the unnecessary expense and labor that would be required to embellish his palace or to prepare his tomb.[16] In a posthumous edict, Ming-ti left instructions that may have had Wen-ti's example in mind. He did not wish to be buried in a specially constructed tomb with its own shrine; he would rather be laid to rest in one of the apartments built as a robing room that was attached to the tomb of Kuang-wu-ti's empress Yin, his own mother.[17]

Shortly afterward, in A.D. 77, the empress dowager issued a long edict in which she decried, and claimed to eschew, an unduly extravagant way of life. The statement was possibly part of a piece of special pleading in which she was hoping to deflect criticism from herself and her family. She claimed that her thrift was intended to set a good example and to bring moral pressure to bear where it was most needed.[18] However, it seems that her warning failed to have any great effect as far as the Ma family was concerned. In A.D. 83, four years after her death, the great wealth that two members of her family were flaunting drew considerable adverse criticism. It was alleged that they had had large residences built, and entertained guests at banquets there by the hundred. They maintained well-stocked stables and were raising money from the Tibetan or other foreign communities. Such ostentation so displeased the emperor that he issued several reprimands, and the decline of the family was set in motion.[19]

In A.D. 89 complaints were voiced, without avail, at the way in which official corvée workers had been set to work to build imposing residences for members of the Tou family. Ho Ch'ang, one of the attending secretar-

15 *Han shu* 96B, p. 3928; A. F. P. Hulsewé, *China in Central Asia: The early stage* 125 B.C.–A.D. 23, *with an introduction by M. A. N. Loewe* (Leiden, 1979), pp. 200f.; Michael Loewe, *Crisis and conflict in Han China* (London, 1974), pp. 159f., 193f.; and Chapter 2 above, pp. 202f.

16 For references to Wen-ti, see *HS* 6, pp. 134–35 (Homer H. Dubs, *The history of the Former Han dynasty* [Baltimore, 1938–55], Vol. I, p. 272); *HS* 36, p. 1951; *Ch'ien-fu lun* 12, p. 130.

17 *HHS* 2, p. 123. 18 *HHS* 10A, p. 411.

19 *HHS* 24, p. 857; *TCTC* 46, p. 1492.

ies, observed that, rather than make such a show of extravagance on behalf of imperial favorites, it would be better to set an example of thrift at a time when China was engaged in campaigns against the Hsiung-nu and public money was in short supply.[20]

A further aspect of the state of mind prevailing in the palace may possibly be seen in the attention paid to formulating the rules for appropriate behavior (*li*). In A.D. 86 it was suggested by Ts'ao Pao, an academician from the kingdom of Lu, that the principles and practices of Han protocol should be set out in a revised form. The superintendent of ceremonial held that such a task lay beyond the powers of Ts'ao Pao; Pan Ku suggested that an assembly of the leading specialists should be convened, with orders to deliberate and recommend necessary changes. The emperor, however, rejected Pan's proposal, in the belief that no constructive result could be expected from such a gathering; he ordered Ts'ao Pao to proceed with the work. Within a year he had presented a compendium of 150 sections (*p'ien*), covering a wide variety of topics and drawn from a wide variety of sources. It was thought likely, however, that the book would arouse excessive controversy, and so it was shelved, with no further action being taken for the time being. In A.D. 91, at the coming of age ceremony of Chang-ti's successor, Ho-ti, the procedures laid down by Ts'ao Pao for such occasions were followed. In 93, however, his work was brought into question and his rules were not implemented.[21]

Alongside these protests and complaints, the governments of Ming-ti (r. A.D. 57–75) and Chang-ti (r. A.D. 75–88) must be credited with the successful accomplishment of some schemes that led to changes or improvements in economic practice. Kuang-wu-ti had intended to repair some of the damage incurred when the Yellow River and the Pien River had burst their banks, during the reign of P'ing-ti (1 B.C.–A.D. 6), but he had been dissuaded from undertaking the task at a time when the empire was still recovering from the disruption of the civil wars. Failure to repair subsequent cases of inundation had led to popular resentment that the government was giving priority to less urgent work. In A.D. 69 a major engineering project was started by Wang Ching, with a force of several hundred thousand conscripts. The dikes were repaired and water gates were built at intervals of ten *li* (some four kilometers) along the stretch of water from Hsing-yang to the sea-coast, in Ch'ien-ch'eng commandery. Various devices were used, and diversions were introduced to prevent flooding. But careful as Wang Ching had been, the expense was enormous.[22] Still, 69 is

20 *HHS* 43, p. 1484; *TCTC* 47, pp. 1520–21. 21 *HHS* 35, p. 1203.
22 *HHS* 76, pp. 2464–65. For Wang Ching, see Joseph Needham, *Science and civilisation in China* (Cambridge, 1954–), Vol. IV, Part 3, pp. 270, 281, 346.

recorded as a year when the world was at peace. No call was made on the population for long-distance service. There had been a series of excellent harvests, and the population was enjoying a high measure of prosperity: grain was cheap, and sheep and cattle roamed the fields.[23]

Attempts had been made during Ming-ti's reign to improve communications by water to ease the transport of grain from the east (Shantung) to the Yang-ch'ang granary near T'ai-yüan. Very considerable forces of manpower had been involved, with a high death rate, and there were no results to show for the effort. The officials and population of T'ai-yüan had suffered with particular severity. Following the advice proffered by Teng Hsün (son of Teng Yü), orders were given in 78 to discontinue using conscript labor for this project, and teams of donkeys were set to work in the place of human labor. Considerable savings were effected annually, both in terms of human lives and expense.[24]

Chang-ti's reign saw a distinct improvement in internal communications in the southern part of the empire. Hitherto, goods that were being transported from the seven commanderies of Chiao-chih had been sent by sea. The ships had been able to put in at Tung-yeh, the only known settlement at that time on the Fukien coast, but thereafter were subject to storm and shipwreck. In A.D. 83 Cheng Hung, a native of K'uai-chi commandery who was conversant with these local conditions, was appointed superintendent of agriculture (*ta-ssu-nung*). At his suggestion a land route was opened up across the mountains, through Ling-ling and Kuei-yang commanderies. This became the normal means of communications, which remained in use up to the time of one of the compilers of the *Hou-Han shu*.[25]

THE REIGNS OF HO-TI, SHANG-TI, AND AN-TI (A.D. 88–125)

Early in Ho-ti's reign (A.D. 88–106) an occasion arose for protest in a matter which involved both foreign policies and the predominant place that the Tou family had gained at court. In 89, as Tou Hsien led a large-scale expedition against the Hsiung-nu,[26] questions were raised about the value and expediency of such a campaign. A number of senior officials, including Jen Wei, the minister of works, protested that it was folly to force troops to undertake arduous service far from home and to squander imperial resources at a time when the Hsiung-nu were not pursuing an aggressive policy. Although their counsel was not heeded, Jen Wei and Yüan An, the

23 *HHS* 2, p. 115. 24 *HHS* 16, p. 608.
25 *HHS* 33, p. 1156. For the isolated nature of Tung-yeh, see Hans Bielenstein, "The Chinese colonization of Fukien until the end of T'ang," in *Studia Serica Bernhard Karlgren dedicata*, ed. Søren Egerod and Else Glahn (Copenhagen, 1959), pp. 101f. 26 See Chapter 3 above, p. 268.

minister of finance (*ssu-t'u*), continued to press their view, to the point that a number of their colleagues came to fear for their safety.[27] However, they were supported by Lu Kung, who rose to be minister of finance in 107. At this time he was still an attendant secretary (*shih yü-shih*), and he begged that the population should be spared on humanitarian grounds from involvement in the campaign that Tou Hsien was leading. He also urged that, in so far as the non-Chinese peoples were comparable with birds and beasts, with completely different habits from those of the Chinese, they should not be admitted to live as members of a mixed community together with Chinese.

In addition, it would be neither just nor expedient to seize the opportunity presented by the recent defeat that the Hsiung-nu had suffered at the hands of the Hsien-pi. The Hsiung-nu had retired a long distance from the defense lines, and it would involve a wholly disproportionate and costly effort to seek them out. Lu Kung cited the view of the superintendent of agriculture that resources were insufficient to mount a campaign, and he quoted the general agreement of officials that it should not be undertaken. Nor should the lives of the general public be sacrificed to indulge the aspirations of a single individual – that is, Tou Hsien.[28]

The *Hou-Han shu* tersely records the empress dowager's rejection of this advice. Ho Ch'ang was another official who questioned the motives of the campaign, alluding to the matter in the course of his protest against the extravagant buildings that were being constructed for the Tou family.[29]

Several incidents indicate that at this time some thought was being given to the criteria for recruiting officials and to scholastic matters. In A.D. 101 an edict ordered that preferential treatment should be given to candidates from the sparsely populated areas of the north, northeast, and northwest; they were to be allowed to send proportionately more candidates for official service, assessed according to the count of the population, than other parts of the empire.[30] In the following year Hsü Fang, who had just been appointed minister of works, suggested that certain changes should be made in the course of the examinations and the system of grading candidates. He was anxious to see that the literal meaning of the texts of the Five Classics was clearly expounded, and he deplored the overfondness of some academicians for elaborating their own interpretations at the expense of the traditional interpretations. These practices had led the way to hetero-

27 *HHS* 45, pp. 1519f. 28 *HHS* 25, pp. 875f.
29 *HHS* 43, p. 1484; and see pp. 295–96 above.
30 *HHS* 4, p. 189; Hans Bielenstein, *The bureaucracy of Han times* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 134; and Chapter 8 below, pp. 515f.

doxy, and considerable dispute had arisen during the administration of the examinations. He proposed that far more attention should be paid in future to explaining the literal meaning of the texts, and that candidates should be judged on their performance in interpreting their meaning; failure to follow the accepted interpretation of the acknowledged masters, or inconsistencies, should count against a candidate.[31]

Hsü Fang's proposal was accepted, and subordinate officials ordered to conform. In 106, at a time when the empress dowager Teng was the dominant influence at court, scholarship was said to be in decline. Fan Chun, who had recently been appointed a member of the secretariat, tried to bring about improvement by a direct appeal to the force of tradition. He showed how emperors in the past, however busy or preoccupied, had found time to spare for learning. There had been a widespread knowledge of certain texts, such as the *Book of filial piety* (*Hsiao-ching*), even on the part of military officers. He reminded the empress dowager of the example set by the Hsiung-nu leader who had attended the court at Lo-yang and set himself to study there. These developments had taken place during the time of Ming-ti, which had been known as a period of "everlasting peace."[32] Such a state of affairs formed a contrast with the contemporary situation, in which scholars were few and the academicians too fond of leisure to work. The decline of scholarship was one of several reasons for the oppressive government of the day, and Fan Chun therefore proposed steps to promote learning.[33]

Ten years later, the empress dowager Teng herself took measures to achieve this end. She summoned some forty nephews and nieces of the late emperor and thirty members of her own family and prepared special housing for their accommodation. They were aged five years or more, and they were to devote themselves to the study of classical texts with the help of teachers. She herself supervised the tests of the young pupils. In a comment attributed to her, she explained that she was motivated by a desire to arrest the decline of the way of living and to restore the cultural influence of the acknowledged masters of the past. She drew a contrast between the luxurious standard of living enjoyed by the members of the privileged families and their abandonment of efforts to study, and she alluded to Ming-ti's reign as an example of the improvement of moral standards by paying due attention to education.[34] The sincerity of these protestations is perhaps open to question. The empress dowager may well have intended to ingratiate herself by this gesture with the world of established scholarship and to

31 *HHS* 44, p. 1500. 32 That is, Yung-p'ing: this was the title of Ming-ti's reign, A.D. 57–75.
33 *HHS* 32, pp. 1125f.; *HHS* 79A, p. 2546; *TCTC* 41, p. 1567, dates this memorial at 106.
34 *HHS* 10A, p. 428.

demonstrate that the influence she exercised over affairs of state was rooted in traditional Chinese values.

Discussion over a matter of institutional protocol, which arose during An-ti's reign, perhaps reflects some of the antagonism or divergence of interests between the main parties who were contending for political dominance at that time. It had been an established procedure that the most senior officials and the regional commissioners (*mu*) were neither obliged nor allowed to absent themselves from their official duties in order to carry out the three years of mourning traditionally required for a parent. The practice had thus declined in other circles. In A.D. 116 the empress dowager Teng decided that these holders of high office should be required to withdraw from official life during the customary mourning period, as a means of improving moral standards. She was supported in this by Liu K'ai, who was known for his rectitude; Liu had served as superintendent of ceremonial from 107, and had then been promoted to minister of works in 112.

When it was suggested that it would be impractical to expect the regional commissioners and the governors of commanderies to conform with the regulation, Liu K'ai objected that they should certainly be expected to do so, insofar as part of their duty lay in providing an example of proper behavior. As a result of his stand, the empress dowager was able to proceed with her reform.[35] This was in fact the first occasion when senior ministers of state were required to follow the practice of three years in mourning.

But the reform did not last long. The decision was brought into question in 121 by the director of the secretariat, who held that the practice had been abolished by Kuang-wu-ti and that his ruling should be adopted as a precedent. This view was countered by Ch'en Chung (son of Ch'en Ch'ung), who had been recommended for office by Liu K'ai. He pointed out that the institution had originated from the very beginning of the dynasty, under the guidance of no less a figure than Hsiao Ho. The abolition under Kuang-wu-ti had been due to the unsettled nature of the times and the need to reduce the administration to its simplest terms. He argued that there was every reason to retain the provision for three years' mourning leave as part of the cultural and institutional tradition of the Han empire. The eunuchs, however, took a different view, regarding the arrangement as highly inconvenient. As a result, in 121 senior officials were relieved of the need, or deprived of the right, to comply.[36] In 154 they were again required to withdraw from office during the mourning period,

35 *HHS* 5, p. 226; *HHS* 39, p. 1307.
36 *HHS* 5, p. 234; *HHS* 46, pp. 1560–61.

and two years later the provision was extended to officials at a lower grade; it was suspended for senior officials yet again in 159.[37]

Toward the end of Ho-ti's reign and thereafter, a number of attempts were made to reduce the palace's expenditure on luxuries. It had been customary for the southern provinces to supply certain types of fresh fruit for the palace by means of express courier, and many of those compelled to undertake this arduous duty died on the road. When informed of the hardships involved, the emperor suspended the transport of the fruit (103).[38] In A.D. 106 it was ordered that fewer exotic delicacies be served at imperial banquets so as to reduce the expenses of the agency responsible. The same year saw the suspension of such entertainments as the ballets of the Man-yen Monster and the Fishes and the Dragons.[39] In the following year the complement of the drummers and pipers of the Yellow Gates was reduced, in order to fill vacancies in one of the guards' units. Fodder for the horses was reduced by half, excepting only those actually used in imperial carriages. All manufacture by the palace agencies of goods that were not required for the ancestral shrines or tombs was brought to a halt.[40]

Part of the reason for these reductions lay in the recognition of popular hardships. At the beginning of the Yung-ch'u period (A.D. 107–113) a succession of droughts and floods had created distress in a number of areas. In 108 Fan Chun, by now assistant to the minister of works (*yü-shih chung-ch'eng*), took the opportunity to submit a memorial insisting on the need for thrift. He proposed that economies be made in official agencies which made or consumed goods that were wasted or that were not essential to the operation of the court, such as those responsible for the imperial table or the manufacture of *objets d'art* and pieces of equipment. He also suggested that the government should follow the precedent set in 92 B.C. for the dispatch of a commission of inquiry to examine the facts and causes of distress in the provinces;[41] he further proposed a few positive measures for the relief of distress. Fan Chun's advice was accepted, and some goods were made over to the poor. He himself was sent on a mission to the northeastern part of the empire, where he established public granaries and successfully provided some measure of relief where it was needed.[42]

An economy measure ordered in A.D. 109 may have owed its origin to the empress dowager's pique. She had not been well, and in the prayers

37 *HHS* 5, p. 234; *HHS* 7, pp. 299, 302, 304; *HHS* 46, pp. 1560–61.
38 *HHS* 4, p. 194; *TCTC* 48, p. 1559 dates this in 103.
39 *HHS* 5, p. 205; *HHS* 10A, p. 422; *TCTC* 49, pp. 1564–65. For these entertainments, see Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 201, note 744. 40 *HHS* 5, p. 208.
41 *HHS* 32, p. 1128. For measures taken to increase agricultural production at that time, see *HS* 24A, p. 1138 (Nancy Lee Swann, *Food and money in ancient China* [Princeton, 1950], pp. 184f.).
42 *HHS* 32, p. 1127.

and formulas offered on her behalf there had been some reference that could be interpreted as pointing to a change in dynastic destiny. Furious, the empress dowager took steps to prevent loose talk of such untoward events. In addition, she canceled the entertainments and musical performances that usually accompanied the annual farewell banquet given for the guardsmen who had completed their tour of duty. At the same time, the complement of 120 youths who took part in the Great Exorcism as the expellers of pestilence was to be reduced by half. In the following year (110) economies were effected by reducing official stipends proportionately to their grades.[43]

At just this time, the question arose of how far the Han government would be justified in expending large-scale resources in order to maintain its hold over the northwestern parts of the empire. The Ch'iang tribes had been particularly troublesome, threatening the security of the Chinese settlements in the region. Considerable expense was incurred for the supplies, transport, and manpower needed to safeguard these colonies. In A.D. 110 P'ang Ts'an, an imperial messenger who rose to be supreme commander (*t'ai-wei*) from 135 to 136, suggested that the best solution would be for the government to cut its losses and withdraw entirely from Liang-chou, removing to the metropolitan area all those inhabitants who could not survive by themselves in the northwest. He believed that such a move would allow a more effective concentration of Chinese strength, with a view to a stronger defense of the border.

P'ang Ts'an's suggestion was opposed by Yü Hsü, who was serving as a gentleman of the palace on the staff of Li Hsiu, the supreme commander. Yü argued that lands brought under Han control by a previous emperor should not be abandoned simply because of the expense involved in their retention. Without a secure hold on the northwest the old metropolitan area, including the site of the imperial tombs, would lie exposed. Finally, he pointed out that the local inhabitants of Liang-chou had long been well-disposed toward the Han empire; but should their lands be abandoned and they themselves removed, it would be impossible to resist their animosity.[44]

Although this argument was compelling enough to prevail against P'ang Ts'an's advice for a time, the question was raised again in 119. At that time the Hsiung-nu were attempting to exert their influence over the states of the Western Regions. They had already killed some of the Chinese at Tun-huang, and some of the kingdoms situated on the routes around the

43 *HHS* 10A, p. 424; Derk Bodde, *Festivals in classical China: New Year and other annual observances during the Han dynasty 206 B.C.–A.D. 220* (Princeton, 1975), pp. 75–76; *HHS* 5, p. 214.
44 *HHS* 51, p. 1688; *HHS* 58, p. 1866.

Taklamakan Desert, such as Cherchen (Shan-shan), were being particularly hard pressed. Their pleas for help, and a Chinese official's request for a force of five thousand men with which to attack the Hsiung-nu, received a mixed reaction in Lo-yang. Some senior officials suggested closing the Jade Gate and thus cutting off the Western Regions. Asked to tender his advice, Pan Yung sketched the history of Chinese relations with the northwest, from the time of Wu-ti (r. 141–87 B.C.) until the revolts of the Ch'iang peoples (A.D. 89–104). These revolts had effectively cut off the states of the Western Regions and rendered them subject to the demands of the Hsiung-nu.[45] He advised that the time was most unsuitable for mounting a campaign against the Hsiung-nu; the Chinese were simply unprepared for such an effort. Instead, he suggested, Chinese settlements in bases such as Tun-huang should be reinforced on a small but effective scale, with a strengthening of the Chinese presence that would allow a firmer grip on the communication routes.

To the question whether such measures could ensure Chinese security, with the Hsiung-nu controlling Turfan (Chü-shih) and the loyalty of Cherchen unreliable,[46] Pan Yung claimed that just as the regional commissioners could maintain law and order within China, so too would he be able to prevent incursions, by much the same means as were at their disposal. He urged that a hold be kept on the Western Regions by posting officials in those states, which would otherwise fall into the hands of the Hsiung-nu; in such circumstances, the Chinese cities to the south would be in danger. Careful selection of the colonels to be placed there would suffice to retain the loyalties of the western states, without a large-scale investment of resources. Should those states request supplies of food from the Chinese, it should not be refused; such a refusal would cause them to start raiding in strength.

Pan Yung's opinion gained acceptance, and a garrison was established at Tun-huang. In the following year (A.D. 120), the Han court established contact with peoples who lived considerably farther west than Cherchen or Turfan. The emperor received a group of musicians, conjurers, fire-eaters, and others, numbering up to a thousand, who claimed to be from the Roman world of the Mediterranean, but probably came from Burma.[47]

A few incidents give some idea of the way in which dynastic intrigues worked out or the administration was operating during these years. As noted above, the downfall of the empress Yin had been effected by lodging a charge of witchcraft (*wu-ku*). Such a strategy for the elimination of a rival

45 *HHS* 47, pp. 1587f. 46 For these states, see Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 76 note 49, 81f., 183f.
47 *HHS* 5, p. 231; *HHS* 86, p. 2851.

was nothing new in Han history; it had been used to dismiss an empress in 130 B.C. and in a much more vicious way in 91 B.C.[48]

It is more pleasant to record a generous and apparently spontaneous tribute paid by the people of Hung-nung commandery to an official whom they admired and loved. This was Wang Huan, who died in 105, while holding the office of mayor of Lo-yang (*Lo-yang ling*). He is described as being a man of upright character, somewhat forbidding at first sight but capable of deep generosity and humanity. His capacity for ferreting out cases of hidden injustice was such that the inhabitants of the capital city credited him with the gift of spiritual powers. His death was generally mourned, and as his funeral cortege made its way westward through Hung-nung commandery, the roadside was lined with the tables of gifts offered to his memory by the inhabitants. They explained to the bewildered officials that this was the return they were making for the relief that they had enjoyed thanks to Wang Huan's administration; he had seen to it that they no longer lost grain on delivery to Lo-yang through pilfering by conscript troops and officers. In addition to the establishment of a shrine set up to commemorate his life, the empress dowager made a display of being impressed by his rectitude and appointed his son to be a gentleman of the palace (*lang-chung*), seeking to encourage others by his example.[49]

Lu Kung was appointed minister of finance in A.D. 107. One of his first recorded actions in that capacity was the submission of a memorial requesting that a change should be made in the schedules for some of the lighter punishments. It had been the established practice for these to be carried out in the autumn, but from 103 onward this had been changed to the summer. This had involved hardship for the agricultural population and interference in their work; officials had been in the habit of implicating as many persons as they could in criminal proceedings. Lu Kung argued that a return should be made to traditional practice. He based his case on the need for judicial processes to be so timed that they accorded with the natural rhythm of the universal order of being, and did not interfere with the seasonal work of the fields. His views prevailed.[50]

The histories elaborate the long, sad tale of the way in which the power and influence of officials waned while that of consorts' families, favorites, or eunuchs grew. It is occasionally possible to gain some idea of the sort of protests that were made as these developments took place. By 120 the behavior of Wang Po-jung was evidently exciting some criticism. She was the daughter of Wang Sheng, foster-mother of An-ti (r. A.D. 106–125),

48 Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, Chapter 2.
49 *HHS* 76, pp. 2468f.
50 *HHS* 4, p. 192; *HHS* 25, pp. 879f.

who had exploited her position for self-aggrandizement and taken to an ostentatious way of life. This had encouraged others to act in an extravagant and oppressive manner, and her easy access to the women's quarters of the palace facilitated bribery and corruption. Yang Chen, minister of finance, dared to comment in a memorial on the need to eliminate evil conduct, in the interests of sound, morally based government; he asked that both mother and daughter be removed from the palace. He raised a case in which Wang Po-jung had manipulated the succession to a marquisate in favor of her husband, and criticized the way in which precedent had been flouted, together with the principle of conferring marquisates on the basis of merit rather than as a mere mark of favor.

Another memorialist, Chai P'u, referred to the way in which the Tou and the Teng families had wrought havoc and reduced the throne to a cipher. He went on to point out the dangers inherent in favoritism, and the unprecedented privilege that the consorts' families had acquired. He begged the emperor (An-ti) to eliminate all sources of flattery and to prevent the use of state power for personal ends. But such remonstrances had no effect.[51]

A further protest likewise fell on deaf ears. This was voiced by Ch'en Chung, supervisor of the secretariat, whose views have already been cited above, in connection with the controversy over the three years' mourning period. Wang Po-jung had been traveling, at An-ti's behest, to perform religious ceremonies on his behalf at his parents' tomb. In the course of these journeys she had been treated with the utmost subservience by all who encountered her, to the extent that her authority was manifestly far in excess of that of the emperor himself. Ch'en Chung pointed out that there were dire warnings from earlier Han history of the results that could ensue from such a state of affairs. He tried to insist that power should be exercised by the emperor himself, in the interests of preserving the correct hierarchies of state and the approved devolution of authority. Ch'en Chung also drew attention to the way in which power had effectively been taken away from the three excellencies and passed into the hands of the secretariat. The lack of principle behind the decisions made by the latter caused him much disquiet.[52]

THE REIGN OF SHUN-TI (A.D. 126–144)

During Shun-ti's reign the conduct of the administration and the behavior of officials came under criticism on a number of occasions. Questions were

51 *HHS* 48, pp. 1602f.; *HHS* 54, pp. 1761f. 52 *HHS* 46, pp. 1562–65.

raised regarding the conditions of service in official posts and at court, and the establishment of power monopolies. Protests were leveled against the eunuchs and the Liang faction, and the question of imperial extravagance was raised once more. The final years of the reign witnessed the outbreak of disturbances that threatened the security of the empire.

In 126 Yü Hsü, who had just been appointed colonel, internal security (*ssu-li hsiao-wei*), raised the cry that the government had been oppressive. He referred to the prohibitions of the law as being a means of keeping the way of life of the population under control, and to the punishments as the bit and reins whereby the people were restricted. Part of his complaint lay in the misuse of these and other measures by officials for their own advantage. There followed a series of charges and countercharges, including those of the wilful misuse of power and the unjustified arrest of innocent persons. A number of senior officials and eunuchs were involved. Yü Hsü displayed remarkable courage throughout these highly dangerous proceedings. At one point the authorities of the prison where he was being questioned recommended to him that he would do well to take his own life. He refused this well-meant suggestion, however, preferring to make his case known, if necessary by suffering public execution. In the event, Yü Hsü was exonerated and appointed supervisor of the secretariat.[53]

In 132, perhaps in order to discourage nepotism, orders were given that candidates for office who were recommended from the provinces should be limited to men of forty years or more; they should all be trained in the literal exposition of the approved texts; and in filling vacancies attention should be paid to ability to draft memorials addressed to the throne. Youngsters who showed evidence of exceptional talent, however, were not to be debarred simply on account of their age.[54]

In a memorial of the same year, Tso Hsiung, director of the secretariat, complained of the effect of short-term appointments or the absence of officials from their posts. Many had been tempted to conduct their administration on a short-term basis, with the result that the population had been subject to arbitrary punishments or extortionate taxation. He claimed that officials were failing to examine cases of corruption or to apply suitable criteria in assessing an individual's merit; and that there had been a number of instances of undeserved promotion. Tso Hsiung entered a plea to bring to an end the constant movement of officials, in the belief that it was the changes of incumbency, or the frequent absences of a serving incumbent, that had given rise to these abuses. An attempt to reenact a ban on officials

53 *HHS* 58, pp. 1870–71. 54 *HHS* 6, p. 261.

absenting themselves from their posts was, however, ineffective – owing, we are told, to the opposition of the eunuchs.[55]

There were signs of some unwillingness to serve in office. Fan Ying was a man of an independent cast of mind, who was well versed in classical learning as well as being a specialist in the lore of oracles; it was possibly due to his personal interests and characteristics that he refused attempts from 127 onward to lure him to accept office. It is also possible that this refusal was due to his distaste for the way in which the government was being conducted, and his preference to stand aside from a dispensation of which he could not approve.[56]

A further instance may also be cited of a man who refused to accept office at this time. This was Lang I, a scholar who, like Fan Ying, was a specialist in esoteric matters and was widely known for his accuracy in foretelling future events. In a memorial submitted in 133, Lang I took the opportunity to criticize a number of aspects of government, including the lack of sufficient rigor in selecting officials. He based many of his criticisms on his interpretation of natural conditions and supernatural phenomena; as he was an acknowledged expert in this type of inquiry, his reputation may have added a certain force to his views.[57]

Two other incidents which concerned the treatment of officials are recorded for 133. The first concerned Li Ku, destined later to take a leading part in public life, but as yet not a member of the civil service. Invited to comment on the needs of the government, he drew attention to cases in which some junior military officers had been given full, permanent appointments without the usual preliminary period of a year's probation. Although this might appear to be a minor matter, he was afraid that a precedent might be set and that might lead to the abandonment of traditional methods of administration. It is not clear how effective Li Ku's protest was.[58]

In the second incident, Liu Chü, superintendent of agriculture, was reprimanded for dereliction of duty and was ordered to report to the secretariat. Along with other penalties, he was to be subjected to the humiliation of a flogging. Tso Hsiung protested that such treatment was inappropriate to the dignity of Liu Chü's high office and pointed out that there was no ancient precedent for the flogging of a senior minister; the practice had

55 *HHS* 61, pp. 2015–19.

56 *HHS* 82A, pp. 2722f. See also Ssu-ma Kuang's comment in *TCTC* 51, pp. 1648f. For disinclination to serve in office, see Chapter 15 below, pp. 784, 795.

57 *HHS* 30B, pp. 1054f.; Rafe de Crespigny, *Portents of protest in the Later Han dynasty: The memorials of Hsiang K'ai to Emperor Huan* (Canberra, 1976), p. 98, note 88.

58 *HHS* 63, p. 2076.

been introduced only during the reign of Ming-ti (A.D. 57–75). Tso Hsiung succeeded in having it ended, and Liu was not beaten.[59]

Shortly after his accession in 126, Shun-ti had demonstrated his gratitude to his foster mother, Sung E, for the part that she had played in bringing him to the throne. He had invested her with the title of Mistress of Shan-yang (*Shan-yang chün*); at the same time, he had ennobled Liang Chi with a marquisate.[60] Tso Hsiung decried the impropriety of these acts of favoritism. They directly contravened the age-old promise of Kao-ti that none save a member of the Liu family should be made a king and that marquisates should be conferred only on the basis of merit. Although he hinted that actions of this type might well lead to catastrophic results, his protest went unheeded.

In 133, Lo-yang was rocked by a severe earthquake, with such serious effects that the emperor was moved to invite comments concerning the occurrence, together with suggestions for appropriate countermeasures.[61] Li Ku took the opportunity to deliver a sharp indictment of the contemporary scene; it was in the course of doing so that he had questioned the way in which some appointments were being made. Son of Li Ho, minister of finance, Li Ku had made a name for himself as a teacher, and it was generally expected in Lo-yang that he would follow in his father's footsteps. He started by drawing attention to the way in which An-ti had broken with tradition in order to ennoble his foster mother, Wang Sheng;[62] this had been followed by the seizure of power by one Fan Feng and his associates, and an upset in the imperial succession. He himself conceded that during the three hundred years of Han history, under no less than eighteen rulers, there had certainly been cases of favoritism, and further that Sung E's achievements may indeed have been great. But they merited monetary compensation rather than the conferment of territory; such a conferment was in defiance of established tradition.

Li Ku next commented on the prominence that had been attained by members of the Liang family. Although similar problems had appeared during Ming-ti's reign, the situation had not been so extreme. He called for a return of Liang Chi and his relations to the offices of the Yellow Gates, so as to reduce the power of the consort families and restore administrative authority to the dynastic house. He also observed that the palace attendants had become far too powerful. An edict had formerly forbidden these officers from examining candidates, to prevent them from exploiting

59 *HHS* 61, p. 2022. 60 *HHS* 61, p. 2021.
61 *HHS* 6, p. 263; *HHS* 63, pp. 2073f.
62 See pp. 304f. above. For this incident, see *HHS* 63, p. 2078; *HHS* 30A, p. 1049 dates it at 135; *TCTC* 52, p. 1680, at 137.

their authority for private ends, as had become the common practice. Li requested that this control be restored.

Li Ku also stressed the need to ensure that there was sufficient integrity and solidarity of interest in all sectors of the government and the court, beginning from the center:

> If the gnomon is crooked, the shadow that it casts will assuredly be bent; if the source of the spring is pure, the flow of water will of course be clean; if the trunk of the tree is struck, all the twigs will tremble.

From this there followed the need for the emperor to consult the men of learning and to attempt to ascertain the will of Heaven. A conspicuous example of praise should be made of those whose advice was reasonable and could immediately be put into effect; the power and complement of the eunuchs should be reduced drastically.

With the court thrown into turmoil by the discovery of his foster mother's involvement in a eunuch plot, Shun-ti was more inclined to accept such advice; the woman was sent back to her residence. As might be expected, Li Ku had earned the enmity of the eunuchs who served the emperor's foster mother and who now set out to engineer his downfall.

But there was at least one other official who used the occasion of the earthquake of 133 as a means of criticizing the contemporary scene. This was Chang Heng, at that time director of astrology (*t'ai-shih ling*), and better known to history as a writer and for his technological and scientific attainments, which included the making of a seismograph. He entered a plea for the restoration of authority to the place where it belonged; that is, to the Son of Heaven.[63]

A further protest against the power of the eunuchs was made by Chang Kang in 135. The immediate motivation for his action may have been the decision that had been made to allow eunuchs to adopt heirs and so transmit the honors and privileges bestowed on them by the court.[64] Wang Kung, who was appointed supreme commander in 136, was another senior official known to despise the eunuchs. In retaliation for his indictment of their offenses, the eunuchs attempted to have him brought up on charges. It was only through the intervention of Li Ku that such action was dropped.[65]

In 134 Shun-ti personally took part in intercessions for rain. As on other occasions when a natural calamity was causing distress, officials were asked

63 *HHS* 59, pp. 1909f. For Chang Heng and the seismograph, see Needham, *Science and civilisation*, Vol. III, pp. 626f.

64 *HHS* 6, p. 264; *HHS* 56, p. 1817; *TCTC* 52, p. 1676.

65 *HHS* 6, p. 266; *HHS* 56, p. 1820.

to tender their advice. In doing so, Chou Chü (a member of the secretariat) accused the emperor of forsaking the model conduct of such noble predecessors as Wen-ti and Kuang-wu-ti, and of following the pattern of extravagance practiced under Ch'in. He believed that the emperor's efforts to pray for a mitigation of the drought lacked substance, and he asked for a manifest and trustworthy improvement in the administration. For example, those women who were attached to the palace but rendered no services there should be expelled, and the expense of the imperial table should be reduced.[66]

In 142 eight officials, who had all earned a reputation for learning and held a number of appointments, were commissioned to proceed on tours of inspection. They were to examine the conduct of administration and the general way of life, principally in the provinces. All set out for designated areas with the exception of Chang Kang, who operated from Lo-yang. Acting in this capacity, he accused members of the Liang family of wielding power thanks to favoritism, of being greedy and self-indulgent, and of surrounding themselves with flatterers in a manner that was unpardonable and militated against the creation of true loyalties. The indictment he drew up on fifteen counts caused a great stir in the city. Because of Liang Chi's relationship with the empress, no heed was taken of Chang Kang's warnings, but we are informed that the emperor himself appreciated the force of Chang's assertions.[67] A few years later a further protest was directed against the Liang family, on the grounds of their ostentation and extravagance.[68]

A positive achievement of Shun-ti's reign may be seen in the reoccupation of territory in the northwest; in A.D. 111 Chinese officials had been withdrawn from parts of Lung-hsi, An-ting, Pei-ti, and Shang-chün. Portions of these lands were recovered in 129.[69] This followed the advice of Yü Hsü who, it will be recalled, had made a similar plea for the retention of imperial territory in 111.[70]

In 137 unsuccessful attempts were made to quell disturbances and revolts that had broken out in Jih-nan and elsewhere in the far south. The suggestion that a force of 40,000 men should be assembled from central China to deal with the situation was opposed by Li Ku on a number of grounds. He argued that to do so would endanger the security of areas such as Ch'ang-sha and Kuei-yang, and that an order for forces to fight a campaign at a long distance from their homes, with no set date for their return, would itself provoke further outbreaks of rebellion. In addition, the tropical climate would result in casualties of some 40 to 50 percent, and

66 *HHS* 61, pp. 2025f. 67 *HHS* 56, p. 1817.
68 *HHS* 65, p. 2131 implies that this protest was made during one of the short reigns that followed immediately after Shun-ti's death in 144; *TCTC* 52, pp. 1698–99 dates it in 144.
69 *HHS* 5, p. 216; *HHS* 6, p. 256; *HHS* 87, p. 2893. 70 See p. 302 above.

troops who were asked to fight after a long and arduous march would not be fit for battle. Li Ku also calculated the cost of supplies and their transport, and found them to be prohibitive. It would be wrong, he said, to denude the center in order to support the periphery, adding that the hardships imposed on troops fighting at such a distance from their homes would be intolerable.

Instead of sending a large force from the north, Li Ku suggested posting a few senior officers, carefully selected for their courage and their ability to govern a civilian population with clemency, as provincial officials in the Chiao-chih region. The population could be temporarily moved from the troubled areas until order had been restored, and some of the local tribesmen could be recruited to assist in putting down the rebels by the promise of material rewards or marquisates. The government adopted Li Ku's proposals, appointing some of the very men whom he had suggested. By a show of good faith and an earnest of well-intentioned government these men eventually succeeded in inducing the dissidents to surrender, restoring peace in the areas south of the Ling range of hills.[71]

Nevertheless, when Shun-ti's reign ended there were indications that the empire was far from being at peace. Only three months after his death (20 September 144), rebels attacked Ho-fei in Chiu-chiang commandery. During the same year, the imperial tomb in which Shun-ti had just been buried was desecrated. In 145 rebel bands several thousand strong attacked or occupied cities in Kuang-ling and Chiu-chiang. While the Hsien-pi were raiding Tai-chün in the north, banditry broke out in Lu-chiang. At the same time, Hua Meng of Li-yang, who declared himself the Black Emperor, attacked and killed the governor of Chiu-chiang. This last outbreak was quelled; the government forces succeeded in killing some 3,800 rebels and capturing 700, and the southeast was restored to order.[72]

THE REIGN OF HUAN-TI (A.D. 146–168)

As had happened in 133, the occurrence in 151 of an earthquake afforded to critics of contemporary social and political conditions an opportunity to express their views. Ts'ui Shih was one of those who were summoned to do so, and although he declined by pleading ill health, his opinions were made abundantly clear in a treatise named *On the administration* (*Cheng-lun*); fragments of this have been preserved.[73]

71 *HHS* 86, pp. 2837f. 72 *HHS* 6, pp. 276–77, 279.

73 *HHS* 7, p. 297; *HHS* 52, pp. 1725f.; *TCTC* 53, pp. 1722f.; Étienne Balazs, "Political philosophy and social crisis at the end of the Han dynasty," pp. 207f. See Chapter 12 below, p. 715, Chapter 15, pp. 788f.

He traced the failure to maintain a good administration to a steady but insidious degeneration of *mores*, and the growing lack of interest and diligence in conducting the affairs of state. There had been a relaxation of discipline at the top, while those below who were intelligent enough to realize what was wrong were reticent. Excessive dependence on the past was ill-conceived; Ts'ui called for a realistic attempt to face the problems of the present and to evolve institutions and methods that met current needs. He further proposed that the laws should be applied in a more rigorous and effective manner, citing the success of such a policy under Hsüan-ti (r. 74–49 B.C.), and pointing to the decline in imperial strength and authority under Yüan-ti (r. 49–33 B.C.), when there had been some measure of relaxation and clemency.

Ts'ui likened the need to apply punishment to a physician's methods of ridding a body of disease. He argued that despite the claim that the dread punishments of Ch'in had been mitigated during the time of the first Han emperors considerable cruelties had still been inflicted in the name of the laws; it could even be maintained that, so far from reducing the severity of the punishments, Wen-ti (r. 180–57 B.C.) had actually increased it. And it was thus that peace had been attained: not through clemency, but severity.

A few years later (A.D. 155) a student of the Academy named Liu T'ao was bold enough to throw part of the blame for the current state of affairs on the emperor himself. He stressed that the emperor was essential to both Heaven and mankind, in the same way as the different parts of the human body are essential to one another. But the present incumbent lived in a state of isolation, completely detached from what was going on and therefore unaware of the oppression that was being visited upon rich and poor alike. "The tigers and panthers lie in their lairs in the playground of fawns; the wolves and the jackals are nurtured in gardens where the spring flowers bloom," he wrote.

Liu T'ao begged the emperor to take heed of the fate that had overtaken Ch'in, thanks to the removal of authority from the emperor, and he cited examples of what had occurred during the reigns of Ai-ti (7–1 B.C.) and P'ing-ti (1 B.C.–A.D. 6). Finally, he put forward the names of a number of officials, who he suggested should be summoned to uphold real authority at the center. But Liu T'ao realized that there was no hope that his advice would be accepted, writing: "I am venturing to offer advice that does not accord with the times, at a court which bans criticism, in the same way as when ice or frost are exposed to the sun they will of course melt." He was duly ignored.[74]

74 *HHS* 57, pp. 1843f.

After the fall of the Liang family in 159, Huang Ch'iung was appointed supreme commander. The steps that he took to search out those who were responsible for oppression and corruption in the provinces led to the death or exile of some offenders, and met with general approbation.[75] However, attempts to bring individual officials to book for such reasons could well be subject to misinterpretation as an attempt to settle personal scores, as happened in the case of the accusations brought by Fan P'ang (159).[76] At just this time, the palace attendant Yüan Yen warned Huan-ti that if he wished to earn a reputation as a good monarch, he must see to it that affairs of state were entrusted to men such as Ch'en Fan rather than to eunuchs. On another occasion he added that the emperor should avoid indulging in favoritism and that he should watch very carefully his relations with those around him, in order to prevent a loss of the dignity that was due to his position.[77]

Ch'en Fan had served as governor of Ch'ien-ch'eng commandery and then as a member of the secretariat. Owing to the blunt advice that he offered, he was transferred to be governor of Yü-chang commandery, a move that was in effect a form of exile. Being a man of somewhat rigid discipline, he came to be feared but respected, and in time he was appointed superintendent of state visits. His efforts to save a critic of the day from unjust appointment earned him a demotion, but he was later appointed superintendent of the imperial household. During his tenure in that office he saw to it that the examination of candidates was conducted scrupulously, without any bias in favor of members of powerful and rich families.[78]

In 159 Ch'en Fan had protested against the habit of conferring marquisates indiscriminately to reward favorites, and he had added a complaint about the large number of women maintained in the palace, with the consequent large expense to the treasury. In this last respect his word carried some weight; some five hundred women were removed. In 163 the emperor had set out on an imperial progress that had combined a hunting expedition with other types of pleasure. This drew further criticism from Ch'en Fan on the grounds of the expense and the diversion of effort from agricultural work at a time when the granaries were depleted; but this protest was without effect.[79]

A similar protest was raised in 165 by Liu Yü, who had recently arrived in Lo-yang as a candidate recommended from Kuang-ling. In addition to suggesting the need for some measures of reform on the part of the emperor, he asked that definite steps be taken to rid the court of flatterers and to eliminate those musical performances that were known to sap the moral

75 *HHS* 61, pp. 2036f. 76 *HHS* 67, p. 2204. 77 *HHS* 48, pp. 1618f.
78 *HHS* 66, pp. 2159f. 79 *HHS* 66, pp. 2161f.

fiber of an audience.[80] In the following year a memorialist asked specifically for a drastic reduction in the complement of palace women, who numbered between five and six thousand, exclusive of their attendants.[81] It was also in 166 that Hsiang K'ai delivered two famous memorials, in which he described astronomical phenomena that had recently been observed and linked them with misconduct that could be attributed to the emperor and the eunuchs. The documents form one of the sharpest rebukes addressed to an emperor during the Han period.[82]

After his appointment as supreme commander in 165, Ch'en Fan presented a memorial courageously seeking to save a number of victims of charge and countercharge from injustice. This earned him the hatred of the eunuchs, but his reputation was such that they did not dare to harm him. On the death of the emperor, in A.D. 167, Ch'en Fan was appointed grand tutor, with responsibility for the business transacted by the secretariat. It was a particularly dangerous moment at court, with the succession yet to be determined. Too frightened of powerful and influential officials to attend to their duties, many of the members of the secretariat absented themselves on a plea of sickness. Ch'en Fan upbraided them for their conduct and forced them to attend to their business. Following Ling-ti's accession in 168, Ch'en Fan persistently refused the gift of a marquisate.[83]

A few incidents concern the operation of the civil service during Huan-ti's reign. In A.D. 154 the provision for leave of absence for senior officials for the statutory three years of mourning, which had been withdrawn in 121, was restored, only to be suspended five years later. The failure to maintain this practice incurred criticism in 166, on the grounds that it had formed an important element in the code that regulated social hierarchies and moral values.[84]

One possible indication of the nature of the times is seen in the refusal of five men who had been recommended by Ch'en Fan to accept posts in the civil service in 159. Another individual, Wei Huan, who was summoned to take office on several occasions, also refused. He felt that he would be unable by means of a successful career in the service to make any impact on the current abuses, such as the large number of women in the palace and of horses in the imperial stables, or the great powers exercised by those nearest to the throne. He would therefore be unable to render any service to those of his countrymen who were urging him to accept nomination.[85]

80 *HHS* 57, pp. 1855f. For the music of Cheng and Wei, see Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 202f.
81 *HHS* 62, p. 2055.
82 *HHS* 30B, pp. 1075f.; for an annotated translation, see Crespigny, *Portents of protest*, pp. 21f.
83 *HHS* 66, pp. 2163, 2168. 84 *HHS* 7, pp. 299, 304; *HHS* 62, p. 2051.
85 *HHS* 53, pp. 1741, 1746–47.

Other cases of this nature have already been noted,[86] but it is likely that they were exceptions to the prevailing attraction to apply for entry into official life. Owing to the encouragement that was ordered in 146, the number of those attending as students of the Academy had risen, we are informed, to 30,000; there is nothing to suggest that the advantages and reputation gained by studying there and by entering the service had declined to a marked degree.[87]

One of the accounts of the introduction of Buddhism to China notes that Huan-ti was of a religious turn of mind and frequently worshipped the Buddha and Lao-tzu. At the close of his reign he sent one of his attendants to pay respects at one of Lao-tzu's shrines, and at a famous ceremony in 166 performed the grand sacrifice to Lao-tzu, with full honors. These practices drew the criticism of Hsiang K'ai, in a famous memorial that rebuked the emperor for indulging in the pleasures of the flesh. The ceremony has been described as savoring not of Buddhism, but of "court Taoism slightly tinged with Buddhism."[88] Shortly before this event orders had been given to destroy a variety of shrines in the provinces; Ssu-ma Kuang understood these measures to be aimed at observances of a type that were not generally acceptable and may have included some abuses (*yin-ssu*).[89]

In A.D. 156 Lo-yang suffered an earthquake. In 157 a solar eclipse was shortly followed by a plague of locusts in the capital city, and earth tremors were felt in Ho-tung commandery.[90] In the course of discussing the difficulties of the times, it was suggested that popular distress could be relieved by reforming the currency, and the proposal that large-sized coins should be minted was referred for consideration. Liu T'ao, that very student at the Academy who had been bold enough to criticize the emperor in 155, pointed out the fallacy of supposing that a manipulation of the currency could be of any material use in such circumstances, when the first priority lay in putting more land under the plough.[91] There were some attempts at this time to improve the economy, such as the reduction of expenditure on officials' stipends. In 161 it became possible to purchase some honors and posts for ready cash; in 165 a tax of 10 cash per *mou* (about a tenth of an acre) of arable land was levied throughout the provinces.[92]

Huan-ti's reign was also marked by some internal disturbances. In 154 Kung-sun Chü led a rebellion in Shantung, in the course of which some local officials were put to death. The central government responded by

86 See p. 307 above. 87 *HHS* 6, p. 281; *HHS* 67, p. 2186; *TCTC* 53, p. 1705.

88 E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist conquest of China* (Leiden, 1959), p. 37. See also *HHS* 7, pp. 313, 316; *HHS* 30B, p. 1081; *HHS* 88, p. 2922; *HHC* 22, f. 12a (260); *TCTC* 55, p. 1787.

89 *HHS* 7, p. 314; *TCTC* 55, p. 1780. For *yin-ssu*, see Michael Loewe, *Chinese ideas of life and death: Faith, myth and reason in the Han period* (202 B.C.–A.D. 220) (London, 1982), p. 109.

90 *HHS* 7, pp. 302–03. 91 *HHS* 57, pp. 1845f. 92 *HHS* 7, pp. 309, 315.

decreeing relief from taxation for victims of the disorders, but before it was crushed in 156, the rebellion had spread extensively, involving some 30,000 persons; some of these had been displaced from their homes. Order was restored partly on account of the charitable measures that an enlightened official took to relieve the suffering.[93] In the following year (157), non-Chinese tribes rebelled against imperial authority in the deep south (Chiu-chen commandery), and there was further trouble both there and in Shantung in 160. Similar outbreaks were also reported from Ch'ang-sha, Kuei-yang and Ling-ling, and these continued until A.D. 165.[94]

93 *HHS* 7, pp. 300–02; *HHS* 38, p. 1286; *HHS* 62, p. 2063; *HHS* 65, p. 2145.
94 *HHS* 7, pp. 302, 307, 309–15.

CHAPTER 5

THE FALL OF HAN

THE CRISIS OF 168

The reign of Ling-ti (A.D. 168–189) began with a crisis. The court eunuchs felt that they had lost their power with the demise of the previous emperor, and they were desperate to regain it. The leading families and officials were overconfident and reacted too late.

The choice of Ling-ti

On 25 January A.D. 168, Huan-ti (r. 146–168) died, leaving no designated heir. The next day, his wife, the empress Tou (d. 172), was declared empress dowager, a title which gave her the authority needed to validate edicts. At this time she was in her late teens or early twenties.

This was not the first time that the throne had been left vacant, and a rich body of precedent had grown up to deal with just such a situation. The empress dowager, in secret consultation with the most senior male member of her family (in this case her father, Tou Wu, d. 168), was expected to select a candidate who met the following requirements. He should be a young male member of the imperial Liu family, chosen from the noble descendants of Chang-ti (r. A.D. 75–88), who together formed the most senior branch of that family.

In order to secure support for the candidate, and in contravention of established practice, Tou Wu called together a conference of at least eight persons representing various cliques and interests. The Tou family was represented by Tou Wu himself, by his son, and by two of his nephews. The powerful families were represented by Yüan Feng (d. ca. 180), the most senior member of the noble Yüan family, and the bureaucracy was present in the person of Chou Ching (d. 168) who, as supreme commander (*t'ai-wei*), was the head of all officials. The palace establishment was represented by Liu Shu (d. 168), whose rank is variously given as gentleman of the palace or palace attendant. Finally, there was the eunuch Ts'ao Chieh

(d. 181), until then a minor figure, who doubtless represented the empress dowager and thus the throne.

Liu Shu is on the record as having proposed for the succession a certain Liu Hung, the third marquis of Chieh-tu-t'ing, at the time a boy of eleven or twelve years of age and a great-great-grandchild of Chang-ti. Chieh-tu-t'ing was about 500 miles northeast of the capital, Lo-yang, and the marquis's family had been living there for the past thirty-six years, since A.D. 132. Liu Shu came from the same region, which may help explain his proposal. There is very little likelihood that the marquis had ever been in the capital or had met previously with Tou Wu.

Liu Shu's proposal was adopted by Tou Wu, who in his turn notified the empress dowager. She agreed, and issued an edict in which she stated that:

> After an investigation of virtues and a discussion of talents, no one was found to match the marquis of Chieh-tu-t'ing, Liu Hung, who, in his twelfth year, has the virtues of King Ch'eng of the Chou dynasty [r. 1115–1078 B.C.] in a majestic way. . . . May Liu Hung be the heir of the late emperor.[1]

Liu Hung is known to history as Ling-ti. Ts'ao Chieh, again as the empress dowager's representative, and Liu Shu were sent to Chieh-tu with a thousand eunuchs and bodyguards of the late emperor to escort the emperor-designate to the capital. The journey there and back took about two and a half weeks, and in the interregnum, on January 30, Tou Wu had himself promoted by his daughter to the rank of general-in-chief (*ta chiang-chün*). This rank was customarily given to the senior member of an empress dowager's family and implied no actual military command.

It was probably also during the interregnum that incidents occurred concerning the late emperor's large harem.[2] The empress dowager had never been Huan-ti's favorite wife, but she had been forced upon him by high-placed bureaucrats. Huan-ti had given his favors to nine other women who were now at the empress dowager's mercy. She killed one of them, but the remaining eight were spared after two eunuchs had vigorously interceded for them. What happened to these women and the rest of the harem is not known, but it is likely that they were sent home. Some of the ladies may have found their way to Tou Wu's household, or at any rate rumors to that effect circulated later in the year.

On 16 February, the emperor-designate's retinue arrived at the gates of Lo-yang and was met there by Tou Wu.[3] Tou Wu and Ts'ao Chieh then introduced the boy to the court, and on the next day the formal enthrone-

1 *Hou-Han chi* 22, f. 21a (pp. 266–67); *Hou-Han shu* 8, p. 327; *HHS* 69, p. 2241. *HHS* does not include the text of the edict.
2 For Huan-ti's consorts, see *HHS* 10B, pp. 443f.; and Chapter 4 above, p. 287.
3 *HHS* 8, p. 328; Hans Bielenstein, "Lo-yang in Later Han times," *BMFEA*, 48 (1976), 95f.

ment took place. This ceremony was accompanied by two acts of state. First, Ch'en Fan (ca. 90–168), an old ally of Tou Wu from the time of the political struggles of the preceding reign, was given the position of grand tutor (*t'ai-fu*); second, Ch'en Fan, Tou Wu, and a third statesman, Hu Kuang (91–172), who had had a distinguished career with a dazzling record, were placed collectively "in charge of the Privy Secretariat," thus creating a regency triumvirate, so common during the Han dynasty.

The struggle for power

These arrangements seemed to be satisfactory to all concerned, and for the rest of February, March, April, May, and early June nothing is recorded except formalities: Huan-ti was buried, and the new emperor announced his accession in the shrines of the founders of the Former and Later Han, respectively.

Meanwhile, however, opposing forces had started to work on the emperor and the empress dowager. The young emperor had taken along with him from Chieh-tu his wetnurse and a few trusted servants whom he called his "lady secretaries." This clique and the eunuchs expected favors and appointments, but so did Tou Wu's side. Evidently, the Chieh-tu-t'ing clique and the eunuchs met initially with more success than did Tou Wu, for it is said that "every time Tou Wu and Ch'en Fan advised against certain appointments, their protests were overridden."[4]

There are, however, no real examples to prove Tou Wu's and Ch'en Fan's bitter complaints about one-sidedness in the distribution of favors. We only know of the case of Liu Shu, who had originally proposed the new emperor, and who was driven to death by a eunuch, Hou Lan (d. 172) with the emperor's connivance.[5] On 10 June, the new emperor's grandfather, grandmother, and father were given honorary titles elevating them to imperial status posthumously; his mother, however, who was still alive in Chieh-tu-t'ing, was not invited to come to the capital, nor was she given full imperial status.[6] Behind this decision we may see the hand of the empress dowager, who wanted to spare herself the embarrassment of two empresses dowager at one court.

Tou Wu and Ch'en Fan began to discuss their misgivings, and Ch'en Fan proposed a drastic solution. In his view, all eunuchs should be executed. It evidently took some time before Tou Wu was brought round to this view, but in the meantime he secured some important appointments

4 *HHC* 23, f. 2a (p. 270). *HHS* does not mention the protests made by Ch'en Fan and Tou Wu at this stage; it simply refers to Ch'en Fan's "worry": *HHS* 66, p. 2169. 5 *HHS* (tr.) 13, p. 3283.
6 The date is incorrectly given in *HHS* 8, p. 328. See *HHC* 23, f. 1a (p. 269).

for his own supporters. He managed to have a protégé appointed an official of the secretariat, and he could depend on the loyalty of the commandant of one of the five regiments stationed in the capital. Perhaps as a threatening gesture to the eunuchs, he appointed several of their victims in the struggles of the preceding reign as members of his personal staff.

On 23 June, there was an eclipse of the sun and Ch'en Fan seized upon this bad omen to urge Tou Wu on.[7] He complained of the influence of the Chieh-tu-t'ing clique and of the eunuchs. Tou Wu decided to act; he read a memorial in the court that asked for all the eunuchs' heads, complaining that they had overstepped the limits of their positions by appointing their clients all over the empire. The execution of all eunuchs without exception was refused by the empress dowager; instead, she handed over the two eunuchs who had frustrated her attempts to kill the eight women of the late emperor's harem earlier in the year.

The cards were now on the table, and initially it seemed that Tou Wu's side was gaining the advantage. On 8 August, honors, doubtless long awaited, were proclaimed ennobling Tou Wu, his son, his nephews, Yüan Feng, Ts'ao Chieh, and four others for their support of the new emperor. One of Tou Wu's nephews was put in charge of a regiment of the standing army, bringing the number of regiments on Tou Wu's side to two.

Ch'en Fan, however, was not satisfied, and he stepped up the pressure on the empress dowager to deliver up more eunuchs. To this end, he read a very strong memorial in the court branding five eunuchs – Hou Lan and Ts'ao Chieh among them – and the Chieh-tu-t'ing clique as traitors. The court was shocked by this and the empress dowager again refused to deliver up the culprits.

A stalemate resulted, and Tou Wu wavered. A new impulse for action came when Liu Yü, a fortune-teller who was an expert in astronomical portents, pointed out to Ch'en Fan that the planet Venus was behaving in a way "not advantageous to great ministers"; he evidently meant the eunuchs. This may have been during August or in early October.[8] Tou Wu and Ch'en Fan must have come to the conclusion that pressure on the empress dowager would not have the desired effect, and they therefore tried a different approach. If the eunuchs could be indicted for specific crimes, their arrest could hardly be blocked. To this end, Tou Wu packed the civil and judicial administration of the capital with his supporters, and then managed to have a eunuch who was loyal to him, Shan Ping, appointed to

7 *HHS* 8, p. 329; *HHS* 66, pp. 2169f.; *HHS* 69, pp. 2242f.

8 For Liu Yü, see *HHS* 57, pp. 1855f. The sources give different dates for the portent, i.e., *HHS* 69, p. 2243, reads eighth month; *HHS* (tr.) 12, p. 3258, reads sixth month; *HHC* 23, f. 2b (p. 270), does not specify the month.

the strategic position of director of the Yellow Gates (*huang-men ling*, or head eunuch), thus acquiring a foothold within the palace.

By now it was late October, and the affair was quickly drawing to a conclusion. In order to obtain incriminating evidence against the eunuchs, the new head eunuch arrested and tortured one of them until he was willing to implicate Ts'ao Chieh and another eunuch, Wang Fu (d. 179). It is interesting to see that at this point, Tou Wu and Ch'en Fan evidently worked at cross purposes. Ch'en Fan wanted the arrested eunuch to be killed immediately, but Tou Wu, hoping to extract more confessions, spared his life.

The crisis

The head eunuch immediately wrote a memorial to have Ts'ao Chieh, Wang Fu, and others arrested, and during the night of 24–25 October he had the fortune-teller bring the memorial into the palace. Neither Tou Wu nor Ch'en Fan seem to have been fully aware of this fact, for the turn that events were now taking evidently surprised them. When the memorial was brought in, no doubt to have it ready for the early morning levée, the eunuchs secretly opened it, after some hesitation; they were shocked at the number of eunuchs named for arrest. Seventeen eunuchs then swore on oath to kill Tou Wu. They "smeared blood on their mouths" and prayed to August Heaven: "The Tou family has no moral principles; we wish that August Heaven will assist the emperor in executing it. A good thing must succeed, and the empire will gain peace."[9] Ts'ao Chieh was woken; he escorted the young emperor to a safe place, gave him a sword, and put his wetnurse at his side. He had the gates closed and forced the officials of the secretariat at the point of the sword to draw up an edict that appointed Wang Fu as head eunuch, with the specific command to execute the rival head eunuch, who was Tou Wu's ally.

Wang Fu killed his rival in the prison and took the tortured eunuch back with him to the palace. Then the eunuchs took the empress dowager by surprise, as they clearly did not trust her. They confiscated her seals, and with that authority they ordered soldiers to guard the two palaces and the road that ran between them; thus protected in the rear, they issued an edict that asked for Tou Wu's arrest. They also changed two key figures in the civil and judicial administration at the capital.

From what followed it can be seen that Tou Wu and Ch'en Fan had not coordinated their plans, and indeed had not foreseen that trouble would

9 *HHS* 69, p. 2243; *HHS* 78, p. 2524.

arise so swiftly. Tou Wu, who had gone out for the night, was surprised by the edict, which was delivered to him by the same eunuch who had been in prison until just some hours before. He refused to accept it, but instead fled to his nephew, the commander of one of the two regiments loyal to him, and awaited the dawn.

In the meantime, Ch'en Fan had likewise been surprised by the events. He hurried to the palace with eighty of his subordinates – not professional soldiers, it would seem.[10] With some difficulty he gained access to the palace compound, where he was confronted by Wang Fu, the new head eunuch. There followed a shouting match. For a while both parties stood their ground, but then the number of eunuch soldiers increased, and they surrounded Ch'en Fan until he was overpowered and taken to prison. He was trampled to death there later that day. What happened to the eighty young men is not known, but apparently there was no fighting between them and the eunuch army.

With Ch'en Fan and the empress dowager out of the way, only Tou Wu remained. The key to this problem lay with a certain Chang Huan, a military commander who had recently returned in triumph to the capital.[11] With him there had also returned his victorious army, and it was to him that the eunuchs turned to have Tou Wu arrested. He had remained uninvolved during the preceding conflict, but now he threw his lot in with the eunuchs and proceeded with his soldiers to look for Tou Wu. At dawn, the two armies met outside the walls of the palace. Again a shouting match resulted, with both sides trying to persuade the other side to defect. It is said that, owing to their great respect for the eunuchs, soldiers began to defect to Chang Huan's side. Company after company went over, and shortly before midday Tou Wu's defenses crumbled. He killed himself, the rest of his family was killed, and other key figures were rounded up and killed, sometimes with their families. It is remarkable that neither during this confrontation nor during the earlier one with Ch'en Fan was there any actual fighting.

The empress dowager was placed in custody in the Southern Palace, and three days later, on 28 October, eighteen eunuchs were ennobled for their "merit in punishing Tou Wu and Ch'en Fan."[12] The third member of the triumvirate, Hu Kuang, who had kept out of the struggle, was rewarded for his prudence with the position of grand tutor, a post left vacant by the death of Ch'en Fan. Dismissals and banishments probably continued to take place for some days, and we are told that "several hundred" died.[13] Ling-ti's reign had begun.

10 *HHS* 66, p. 2170. 11 *HHS* 65, p. 2140; *HHS* 69, p. 2244.
12 *HHS* 8, p. 329; *HHC* 23, f. 4b–5a (p. 271). The reason for ennoblement is not stated in *Hou-Han shu*. 13 *HHS* (tr.) 13, p. 3270.

THE REIGN OF LING-TI (A.D. 168–189)

Under the rule of the eunuchs, the structure of imperial government changed. First, a career in the bureaucracy was closed to all but allies of the eunuchs; subsequently it became something that was bought and sold. The eunuchs themselves penetrated into the military. Never-ending rebellions forced the court to delegate some of its powers to provincial governors, and squabbles over the succession created rifts within the palace itself. This was the last period of orderly Han government.

The court in May 189

At the end of Ling-ti's reign, in May 189, the two most formidable ladies of the court were the emperor's mother and the emperor's wife, and these ladies were not on good terms. When the Tou Wu crisis was over and Empress Dowager Tou was locked up in the Southern Palace, the new emperor hastened to send for his mother to join him in Lo-yang. He gave her full imperial status early in 169, and as Empress Dowager Tung (d. 189) she resumed her great influence over the boy.

The emperor's wife, the empress Ho (d. 189), was a butcher's daughter who had bought her way into the harem; in 176 she bore the emperor his first son, Liu Pien (176–190).[14] This had won her the title empress in 181, but, knowing how insecure that position was, she had every reason for alarm when, in that same year, another son was born, to another lady. This second son and his mother, Lady Wang (d. 181), were a threat to the empress and her son. For if he so wished, the emperor could repudiate her and take Lady Wang as his new empress. He might also choose this second son as his heir and successor; the emperor was fond of the child and had called him Liu Hsieh (181–234), which means "Liu who looks like me." To forestall this, the empress poisoned Lady Wang. But the child was taken out of her reach and raised by the emperor's mother, the empress dowager. When the furious emperor prepared to depose the empress, eunuchs dissuaded him.[15]

Both ladies, therefore, had their own candidate for the succession. If the eldest son succeeded, the empress would automatically become empress dowager, and in that capacity she would be able to hold on to power for many years to come. If the younger son succeeded, the empress dowager would become grand empress dowager and could look forward to continued years of power and influence. In fact, however, right up to the day of his

14 *HHS* 10B, p. 449; *HHC* 24, f. 10b (p. 290). 15 *HHS* 10B, p. 450.

death, 13 May 189, Ling-ti had not been able to decide between his two sons and the question was still unresolved.

The empress dowager Tung counted among her assets one nephew who had been given a high general's post and some one thousand men to command. The empress Ho counted among her assets her half-brother Ho Chin (d. 189), who held the exalted rank of general-in-chief from 184. This rank gave him political powers in times of national emergencies, but no actual troops to command. Another half-brother of the empress, Ho Miao (d. 189), held the distinguished rank of general of the chariots and cavalry (*chü-chi chiang-chün*), only one step below the rank held by the empress dowager's nephew. Ho Miao did have troops at his command.[16]

Ling-ti's predecessor, Huan-ti, had not been very popular in his time. His excessive reliance on eunuchs from 159 onward had caused resentment among officials and those who aspired to be officials; such men saw themselves as "pure" in contrast with the eunuchs and their allies, who were branded "foul." There had been a steady stream of memorials against the eunuchs, and several incidents pitting "pure" officials against "foul" eunuchs, and the court had been defied in matters regarding life and death by officials. In 167 agitation among students at the Academy and officials who had connections with them had reached such a point that the court felt obliged to exclude some of them from holding any office whatsoever. In the field of political philosophy, some authors had attacked contemporary evils with a vehemence rarely seen before.

The prestige of the throne and of its occupant had further decayed during Ling-ti's reign. He had been called "mediocre" and "benighted" during his own lifetime, and soon after his death the leading politician of the day, Tung Cho (d. 192), said: "Any thought of Ling-ti makes me furious." In A.D. 190, four of Ling-ti's predecessors were deprived of their posthumous titles on the ground they had been "worthless sovereigns";[17] Ling-ti had never been considered for such a title in the first place. During his reign, at least one plot had been hatched to replace him with another member of the Liu family, and he had had to suffer the indignity of seeing four men proclaimed as rival emperors in different parts of China (one in the south in 172, one in Lo-yang itself in 178, one in the north in 187, and one in the west in 188).[18] In the year 184, a massive propaganda effort had succeeded in convincing hundreds of thousands of Chinese peasants

16 For Ho Chin and Ho Miao, see *HHS* 8, pp. 348, 354, 358; *HHS* 10B, p. 447; *HHS* 69, pp. 2246f.

17 *HHS* 9, p. 370; *HHS* 74A, p. 2374; *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien* 59, p. 1903 (Rafe de Crespigny, *The last of the Han: being the chronicle of the years 181–220 A.D. as recorded in chapters 58–68 of the* Tzu-chih t'ung-chien *of Ssu-ma Kuang* [Canberra, 1969], p. 55).

18 *HHS* 8, pp. 334, 354, 356; *HHC* 24, f. 4a (p. 285).

that the days of Han were over, with the result that they had taken up arms to overthrow the dynasty and to create a new era of happiness. This rebellion, called the Yellow Turbans after the color of the cloth that the rebels wrapped around their heads, had been crushed early in 185, but its effects were still very much visible in May 189.

Military organization

These effects were most noticeable in the military organization. In the first place, there was the regular standing army consisting of five regiments, the same army that had refused to come to Tou Wu's aid in 168. It is not clear how this army was deployed in May 189: some of it may have been in the capital; some of it may have been in various parts of the country where rebellions were going on. All these rebellions were in some way or another the result of the Yellow Turban rebellion of 184.[19]

When the Yellow Turban revolt had broken out, the court had hastily created new titles for the military men it sent into the field against them. In the five intervening years some of these titles had been rescinded, but in May 189 there were still many titles and persons that did not fit into the regular military system. One of them was the general-in-chief, Ho Chin, the empress's half-brother. His title had been conferred on him almost on the very day that news of the Yellow Turbans had reached the capital. Although he had played no role in the war against the rebels, the title could not very well be taken away once the rebellion was over. There was also the title general of the agile cavalry (*p'iao-chi chang-chün*), which had been given to the emperor's mother's nephew.

General of the chariots and cavalry was the title given to another half-brother of the empress (Ho Miao), and next to him there were three other generals, appointed in May 189. One was the general of the rear, Yüan Wei (d. 190), a member of the noble Yüan family.[20] The other two were the general of the van and the general of the left, both away fighting rebels in the east of the empire. These six generals' titles all represented a deviation from normal practice, and some of them had lain dormant since the days of the wars of the restoration, 150 years previously. They were revived not only in response to the never-ending rebellions, but also as a means of satisfying the ambitions of the two leading ladies' family members.

It was the title of general-in-chief, previously held by Tou Wu for a few brief months in 168, that was the least unusual. There had been six such

19 *HHS* 8, pp. 348f.
20 *HHS* 8, pp. 354, 356–57. For the titles and appointments of generals, see Hans Bielenstein, *The bureaucracy of Han times* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 121f.

officers prior to Ho Chin's appointment, but all except one had died a violent death in struggles with the court.[21] Apparently, there was a conflict of interest between some of the generals-in-chief and the emperors, and in Ho Chin's case it was to be no different. Prior to 188, general-in-chief was in fact the highest title available to commoners (except grand tutor), and Ho Chin could use his authority to overpower the court and the eunuchs in the event of an emergency. It was probably as much for this reason as for any other that in September 188 Ling-ti took the unprecedented step of appointing a eunuch as commander-in-chief of a wholly new army. This commander-in-chief, Chien Shih (d. 189), was a protégé of the emperor, and even the general-in-chief was under his orders.[22]

Ostensibly, the new army, called the Army of the Western Garden, had grown out of the emperor's fear of the Yellow Turbans. Next to the eunuch commander-in-chief, he appointed seven men who were not eunuchs as colonels of the Army of the Western Garden. Some of these colonels had made a name for themselves in the wars against the Yellow Turbans and other rebels; others belonged to the influential Yüan family or were protégés of that family. The colonels' soldiers had probably served under their command previously, and this may have been the third motive behind the creation of the new army. In defense against rebels, many private individuals had begun to recruit their own armies. The Western Garden Army provided some sort of legality for these armies, and ensured that they would fight on the side of the emperor.

The appointment of a eunuch as commander-in-chief was the last logical extension of a process that had started right after the Tou Wu crisis, the extension of eunuch power into all branches of the imperial government. Ts'ao Chieh, one of those who had plotted Tou Wu's downfall, had been general of the chariots and cavalry for one hundred days in 169, and again for five months in 180. Another eunuch held the same rank for four months in 186, and now Chien Shih was commander-in-chief. On 21 November 188, the emperor, seated under a magnificent umbrella, reviewed his troops and declared himself supreme general (*wu shang chiang-chün*) – the first time during Later Han that an emperor took an additional title.[23]

In spite of these precautions, the colonels of the Army of the Western Garden hardly ventured out into the field. In December 188, the commander-in-chief sent his deputy to fight rebels in the west, and another

21 See Chapter 8 below, p. 515.

22 *HHS* 8, p. 356; *TCTC* 59, pp. 1890–91 (de Crespigny, *Last of the Han*, p. 40, and see p. 385, note 13) records the establishment of the eight colonels of the Western Garden; for Chien Shih, see *HHS* 58, p. 1882; *HHS* 69, p. 2247.

23 *HHS* 8, p. 356; *HHC* 25, f. 9b (p. 303).

colonel successfully fought remnants of the Yellow Turbans south of the capital. This latter colonel, however, received no recognition of his victory and died in jail just one month before the emperor himself died. In the early months of 189, when roaming rebels threatened the capital, it was not the Western Garden army that was sent against them, but a minister leading his own private army. Another rebel, one whom the court had been unable to conquer, was showered with titles and privileges; this gesture implied that it paid to rebel against the Han. There was something undeniably weak about the dynasty, in spite of all its new titles, new structures, and new armies.

When Ling-ti lay dying, one of the two generals fighting in the east, Tung Cho, had been recalled to the capital to assume a civilian post, but he had refused to accept the charge. Instead, he claimed that his troops would not let him go, and with these troops he marched in the direction of the capital. Ling-ti scolded him by means of a letter, which Tung Cho ignored. When Ling-ti breathed his last, Tung Cho had advanced to a point some 80 miles northeast of the capital "to wait for the changes that time would bring."[24]

The great proscription (tang-ku), 169–184

Twenty of the years of Ling-ti's reign represent the longest consecutive period of eunuch rule during the history of the dynasty. We have already seen how, toward the end of the period, such influence came to extend into the military organization. Very little is known about the background of the eunuchs, how they were selected for castration and by whom, or how they were given positions in the palace. We do not know whether there was a system of cooptation or whether they had to pass any tests. We do know, however, of their great influence on affairs, and their great staying power once entrenched in the ruler's confidence.[25]

In May 189, all of the important eunuchs involved in the Tou Wu crisis were gone. Hou Lan had committed suicide in 172, Wang Fu had died in jail in 179, and Ts'ao Chieh had died a natural death in 181. Their places had been taken by Chien Shih (d. 189), the commander-in-chief of the Army of the Western Garden; Chao Chung (d. 189), who had been general of the chariots and cavalry for four months in 186; and Chang Jang (d. 189), the mastermind behind the emperor's financial manipulations. Ling-ti called Chao Chung his "mother" and Chang Jang his "father." The Yüan family also had a representative within the eunuch establishment, Yüan She (d. 179), who held the rank of regular palace attendant (*chung-ch'ang-shih*).[26]

24 *HHS* 72, p. 2322; *TCTC* 59, pp. 1897f. (de Crespigny, *Last of the Han*, pp. 48f.).
25 For the earlier history of the eunuchs, see Chapter 3 above, pp. 287f.
26 For these eunuchs, see *HHS* 34, p. 1186; *HHS* 45, p. 1523; *HHS* 78, pp. 2522–38.

The eunuch establishment consisted of a bewildering variety of titles and offices, and in the course of Ling-ti's reign this variety had increased. It was by now common for eunuchs to hold noble titles which they transferred to adopted sons. Eunuchs were usually ennobled in groups, a reflection of the fact that they cooperated in groups when they aided the throne against a military leader or an encroaching bureaucrat. In 126, nineteen eunuchs had been ennobled on the same day, in recognition of their help in placing Shun-ti (r. A.D. 125–144) on the throne; in 159, five eunuchs had been ennobled (together with seven men who were not eunuchs) for their help in eliminating the general-in-chief Liang Chi's (d. 159) influence; in 168, eighteen eunuchs had been ennobled for their help in doing away with Tou Wu and Ch'en Fan; in 172, twelve eunuchs were ennobled for having discovered a plot against the throne; in 185, twelve eunuchs were ennobled because the emperor was led to believe that they had been of help in quelling the Yellow Turbans. Chao Chung and Chang Jang belonged to the group of twelve ennobled in 185.[27]

The variety of titles available to eunuchs increased after 175. That year it was decreed that all offices in the palace that were headed by directors would henceforth be headed by eunuchs. Similarly, all posts of assistant to the directors were reserved for eunuchs. It is not specified which offices were affected by this measure, but it is likely that from 175 onward the emperor's table, writing utensils, clothes, jewelry, precious objects, and even his health and medicine, were entrusted to eunuchs. From 175 it was also a eunuch who determined "the price of things," which probably meant the price that the court paid for its purchases.[28]

This, however, was a minor matter in comparison with the offices that became available to their protégés, their brothers, and their parents, as a result of the Great Proscription (*tang-ku*) of 169–184. This had started toward the end of 169 as a smoldering conflict between the eunuchs, firmly entrenched in the ruler's confidence since the Tou Wu crisis, and some high bureaucrats who were resentful of their lack of influence. It had now come out into the open, and the eunuchs had won. Eight officials were accused of banding together as a clique that was injurious to the emperor's interests, and when these eight had been killed the way was free to kill about a hundred more of their protégés, sons, and parents. When this was done and their wives and smallest children had been banished to the cold north or the malaria-ridden south, notices went up in the office of the superintendent of trials with the names of those who were forbidden in

27 *HHS* 78, pp. 2525, 2534–35.
28 *HHS* 8, p. 337; *HHS* (tr.) 26, pp. 3590f.; Chapter 8 below, pp. 501f.

perpetuity to hold any office. Not only were they themselves excluded, but also all those who shared a common great-great-grandfather with any of the listed persons.[29]

It had taken some time before Ling-ti, only thirteen years old, had fully understood what was going on. Although such a massive proscription had once been in effect in 166–167 during a similar struggle between bureaucrats and eunuchs, the new emperor did not know what the words "proscription of a clique" (*tang-ku*) meant. When it had been explained to him that this meant that the "clique" plotted against the state itself, the emperor approved the edict, and the Great Proscription started. In 176 an official had dared to ask for an abolition of the proscription; as a result, the proscription was widened and applied to everybody having any connection at all with the "clique." In 179, with Hou Lan and Wang Fu dead, the scope of the proscription had been somewhat narrowed, but it took until 184 and the Yellow Turban rebellion before the eunuchs lost their grip on the appointments, and then the Great Proscription ended.[30] In the meantime, however, the nature of high office had changed; from something acquired through skill and merit, it had become something that was sold to whoever offered the highest price.

In the early days of the dynasty, the number of eunuchs had been no more than fourteen, but it is reported that toward the end of Ling-ti's reign, the number had swollen to two thousand. It should not be thought that this huge establishment lived in peace and quiet, and in fact internal rifts had appeared. The foremost rivalry was between the eunuchs belonging to the establishment of the emperor's mother and those belonging to that of the empress. Another division was between the twelve eunuchs ennobled in 185 for merit and some other eunuchs who resented their sway over the empire's finances and talents. During Ling-ti's reign there had been plots of eunuchs against eunuchs, accusations had been brought in and counter-accusations had been the result. In the end, the twelve eunuchs triumphed over all their enemies.

In 171 there was a plot to have the empress dowager freed from her luxurious prison, and most serious of all, it was a eunuch who told the emperor in 184 that the cruel exactions of the twelve and their proscription had caused the Yellow Turban rebellion. In the first case, the eunuchs intervening for the empress dowager Tou were accused of speaking maliciously about the emperor's mother—and so the two women were used against each other. In the case of the Yellow Turbans, deft maneuvering

29 *HHS* 8, pp. 330–31; *HHS* 67, pp. 2183f. 30 *HHS* 8, pp. 338, 343; *HHS* 67, p. 2189.

succeeded in shifting the blame from the twelve living eunuchs to Wang Fu and Hou Lan who had died, discredited, a few years earlier; then to two eunuchs who belonged to the establishment of the emperor's mother, and finally to the accuser himself. We have seen that the twelve were even ennobled the next year for their pains.[31]

The eunuchs themselves held power only within the palace, but in the years of the Great Proscription, relations, protégés, and adherents of the eunuchs had been appointed to posts within the capital and in the countryside, thus building up a vast network of influence. It is not clear how the end of the proscription affected this situation, but the eunuchs remained the most important holders of power during the rest of Ling-ti's reign. Whatever plot was made to discredit and destroy them, they always resurfaced. When, on the other hand, the eunuchs plotted to have someone discredited or destroyed, they nearly always succeeded.

The most spectacular case was that of the king of Po-hai (d. 172), a younger brother of the late Huan-ti. He had lost his title and his kingdom, but had promised to pay money to Wang Fu if the latter could have it restored. Wang Fu delivered the desired result, but the other did not pay up. In 172, Wang Fu had his revenge. The king was accused of sacrilege. He committed suicide, and Wang Fu and eleven others were ennobled.[32] In 179, a plot against the eunuchs failed miserably, and four high-ranking officials perished. In 181, it was a group of eunuchs who persuaded the emperor not to depose the empress Ho, who had just poisoned Lady Wang. Many more examples could be given of the successes of the eunuchs, and only a few of their failures. As long as Ling-ti lived their influence could not be broken, and it was a final sign of his trust when the emperor on his deathbed placed his younger and favorite son, Liu Hsieh, in the charge of Chien Shih, the eunuch commander-in-chief.[33]

The state of the bureaucracy in May 189

In the course of the twenty-one years of Ling-ti's reign (A.D. 168–189), the imperial bureaucracy changed almost beyond recognition. We have seen that many military titles were revived or created because of the series of rebellions that had plagued his reign ever since the Yellow Turbans, and to accommodate various interests in rhe capital. In the civil service, a parallel developmenr took place. A few new ritles were created or revived; in other cases existing offices were given new functions and powers. When such new

31 For these events, see *HHS* 78, esp. pp. 2534f.
32 *HHS* 8, p. 333; *HHS* 55, p. 1798; *HHS* 64, p. 2109.
33 *HHC* 25, f. 12b (p. 305); *TCTC* 59, p. 1894 (de Crespigny, *Last of the Han*, p. 44).

titles concerned only the emperor's own household staff, the impact was perhaps not very great. This was the case with the three new imperial parks laid out in 180, the new imperial stables founded in 181, and the Bureau of the Orchard created in 183.[34] These new establishments were probably staffed with eunuchs only.

The highest ranks in the civil bureaucracy did not change visibly. The grand tutor, Hu Kuang, had died in A.D. 172, and no successor had been named. This was according to precedent; the nominal task of the grand tutor was to guide a young and inexperienced ruler "toward goodness," and when a grand tutor died, no new one was appointed until the accession of a new emperor. It is true that Hu Kuang's own appointment had represented something of an anomaly, since he was Ling-ti's second grand tutor, appointed after the first one, Ch'en Fan, had met his death thanks to the eunuchs in October 168. Evidently it was not considered necessary to depart further from precedent by appointing a third grand tutor for Ling-ti, the more so since the emperor had officially come of age in 171.[35] The function, therefore, was vacant in May 189.

When there was no grand tutor, the top ranks of the civil service consisted of three excellencies, nine ministers, and eight secretaries with stipends equal to those of ministers. Ostensibly this structure remained the same during the whole of Ling-ti's reign, but there was in fact an important change in the situation after A.D. 178. From then on, high office had to be bought for cash; it was no longer conferred on those who were the most deserving, but simply on those who were the richest.[36]

In a way, sale of office was the logical outcome of a process that had started some seventy years previously, when it became the custom to dismiss the three excellencies after freakish or disastrous events. Such events, such as earthquakes or the birth of children with two heads, were considered to be Heaven's criticism of the emperor's conduct, and by shifting the blame to the three excellencies the emperor was exonerated. Under such circumstances, however, it became impossible to predict how long any of the three excellencies would stay in office. Their function was, in fact, separated from political reality. This weakening of their power was offset by an increase in the power of other government institutions. Initially this had been the secretariat, but since the Tou Wu crisis, it had moved to the eunuchs.[37]

34 *HHS* 8, pp. 345, 347; Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," p. 81.
35 *HHS* 8, pp. 329, 332, 333.
36 *HHS* 8, p. 342; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, p. 141; Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," p. 78.
37 For the records of these events and their relation to political or other developments, see *HHS* (tr.) 12–18. For the discussion of these events as a vehicle for criticism, see Hans Bielenstein, "An interpretation of the portents of the Ts'ien-Han-shu," *BMFEA*, 22 (1950), 127–43; and Hans Bielenstein, *The restoration of the Han dynasty*, Vol. II, *BMFEA*, 31 (1959), pp. 237f.

On a limited scale, for a limited period, and in answer to great financial difficulties, sale of office had been made possible on a few occasions previously, in 109 and in 161. In 178, however, the offices for sale included the highest of the empire, and Ling-ti could not claim any financial difficulties other than those occasioned by his own greed, that of his mother, and that of some of the eunuchs. If it was the political insignificance of the three excellencies that made the sale of office possible, it was corruption in high circles that rendered it attractive.

The sale of office was organized from a building called the Western Quarters, in the Western Garden. It cost 10 million cash to become one of the three excellencies; 5 million cash secured one of the posts of the nine ministers (*chiu-ch'ing*); and for the governership of one of the one hundred or so commanderies one had to furnish 20 million cash.[38] Those with an excellent reputation were allowed to halve the price, and in practice every official who had received an appointment went first to the Western Garden to bargain. In these bargainings, it was not always the court that won. In 185, Ts'ui Lieh (d. 192) became minister of finance for the price of 5 million, and during the installation ceremonies Ling-ti was heard to remark, "If we had kept him waiting a bit longer, we could have got ten million out of him." In order to get more money, after 187 the emperor allowed the sale of lesser marquisates (*kuan-nei hou*).[39]

Euphemistically the emperor called the money thus collected his "courtesy money" (*li-ch'ien*), and he had a treasury built to store it, the Western Quarters. It was there too that he stored the "gifts" that flowed to him from all over the empire, offered to the emperor himself, to his mother, or to certain eunuchs, in the hope of achieving recognition or advancement; it was there that he stored the millions of cash being squeezed out of the population, at a rate of 10 cash per *mou* (0.113 acres), during 185 for the building of a new palace; and it was there that the 300 million cash levied by "irregular decrees" were also stored. Another invention, "Army Assistance Funds," also went there, but when the emperor abolished all difference between the private and the public purse in 185 he built another treasury, the Hall of Ten Thousand Cash, to store the empire's annual taxes. The only time the Western Garden was of any use to the government as a whole was in 184, when the emperor magnanimously offered his horses to the armies fighting the Yellow Turbans.[40]

38 Payments for the governorship of commanderies, which could at times amount to 30 million cash, were started after disastrous fires had raged in the southern palace of Lo-yang: Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," pp. 31f.

39 *HHS* 8, p. 355; *HHS* 52, p. 1731; *TCTC* 58, p.1878 (de Crespigny, *Last of the Han*, p. 26).

40 *HHS* 8, pp. 351–52; *HHS* 71, p. 2300; *HHS* 78, p. 2535. For "courtesy money," see *HHSCC* 8, f. 8a, citation in final note.

Some of the people who bought high office were nouveaux riches whose ancestry is unknown and whose descendants are lost to history. Others, however, included the cream of imperial society. The influential Yüan family bought one of the three excellencies' positions for one of its members, Yüan Wei, in 182; Ts'ao Sung (d. 194), the adopted son of a eunuch, became one of the three excellencies for a reported 100 million cash in 188.[41] Apparently, the prestige of being one of the Han dynasty's three excellencies was enough to command a high price.

If there was no shortage of candidates willing to apply for high office in the capital, the situation with regard to other offices was different. Apart from those who did not want to pay and made a fuss over the issue, thus embarrassing the court, there were deeper reasons why some extraordinary measures had to be taken to fill all posts. One of the reasons was the Great Proscription, which lasted from 169 until 184. Another was the so-called exclusion system: An official was not allowed to serve in the commandery or county in which he had been born; he was also excluded from serving in the domicile of his wife.[42] These rules had become increasingly complex, and in Ling-ti's time long-term vacancies resulted.

In order to have more persons available to hold office, in 176 the court appointed over one hundred elderly university students after a summary examination; next year, in another surprise move, some merchants were awarded the title "filial son" and were immediately given minor posts. Such ad hoc measures proved unsatisfactory, and in 178 another unprecedented step was taken. A whole new university, the School at the Gate of the Vast Capital (Hung-tu men hsüeh), was created, and its students were virtually guaranteed an appointment to the bureaucracy. The students of the normal university were apparently not considered politically safe enough, witness the fact that in A.D. 172 over a thousand of them had been imprisoned by the eunuchs in the course of yet another brief power struggle in the capital. There is no mistaking the shock that the new university caused. Several officials protested against the favoritism that the emperor showed to its students, but all the evidence suggests that the emperor ignored their complaints.[43]

We have seen how the rebellions affected military organization; during the last year of Ling-ti's reign, their effect came to be felt on the civil service as well. It came to the court's attention that its repeated failures to

41 *HHS* 52, p. 1731; *HHS* 78, p. 2519.

42 For these rules, see Yen Keng-wang, *Chung-kuo ti-fang hsing-cheng chih-tu shih*, Vol. II, *Ch'in Han ti-fang hsing-cheng chih-tu* (Taipei, 1961), pp. 345f.

43 *HHS* 8, pp. 333, 338–40; *HHS* 78, p. 2525; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, p. 141; and Chapter 8 below, pp. 516f.

deal swiftly with rebellions were caused by basic weaknesses in the local administration. The rebellions were usually too wide-spread to be dealt with by the relatively small armies of the various commanderies but there was no one on the spot with sufficient authority to mobilize and command larger armies. Every time a larger army had to be deployed, the court had to appoint a new commander. Before this whole process was completed, the rebellion had often escalated and inflicted humiliating defeats on the commanderies. The court, however, was afraid to leave potentially powerful commanders of large armies permanently away in the provinces, and in the beginning resorted to makeshift measures. An effort to have a court official as permanent commander of a provincial army had already proved unsuccessful in A.D. 179. In the intervening years other devices had been invented, but in 188 the court finally took an important, and in retrospect, fateful step. It appointed regional commissioners (*mu*; literally "shepherds") for regions (*chou*) ridden by rebellion.[44] These commissioners were to be stationed in their areas; they held full ministerial rank, and took precedence over all other local officials. In other words, relatively independent provincial power centers had been created. One of them was to develop into a fully independent empire, taking upon itself the mandate of Han and claiming to be its only legitimate successor.

From his deathbed, Ling-ti made his two last appointments, and both concerned regional commissioners. Messengers were sent north to give the very successful commissioner of a northern province, Liu Yü (d. 193), the additional title of supreme commander. This was only the second time that one of the three excellencies had been appointed outside the capital.[45] At the same time, messengers were sent west with the credentials of a commissioner to offer the title to a general who was refusing to disband his troops. Against orders this general was leading his troops toward the capital, so his appointment as commissioner may have been a last effort to force him to take his army back with him to his own area.[46] Whatever the reason, it did not work. The general was none other than Tung Cho, and even with his additional title he continued his march on the capital, arriving, as we have seen, at a point 80 miles northwest of Lo-yang when Ling-ti breathed his last on 13 May 189.

Rebellions and wars

Four kinds of wars beset Ling-ti's reign: there were raids and incursions into Chinese territory by foreign peoples; there were uprisings of foreign

44 *HHS* 75, p. 2431; *HHS* 82B, p. 2734.
45 *HHS* 8, p. 357; *HHS* 9, p. 368; *HHS* 73, pp. 2353f. For the first occasion, see *HHS* 72, p. 2321.
46 *HHS* 72, p. 2322.

peoples within Chinese territory; there were revolts and mutinies pitting Chinese against Chinese, usually for reasons of material distress; and there were rebellions with religious, antidynastic overtones.

Raids and incursions were nothing new, nor was the court's inability to protect its northern provinces from nomads and horsemen who came to grab what they could not afford to buy. "From 168 onwards, no year was free from them," says the historian.[47] This refers specifically to the situation along the northeastern edges of the frontier. Two nomadic peoples, the Wu-huan and the Hsien-pi, descended every winter on the relatively rich and well-stocked Chinese towns, but only once, in 177, did the court send a large expedition against them.[48] Part of the expedition consisted not of Chinese, but of cavalry of yet another foreign people, thus honoring the political adage of "using barbarians against barbarians." This force was defeated, and from then on the war was left to the local officials, who were unable to cope with it.

If we look along the northern frontier in a westward direction, the situation between the Chinese and the foreign peoples living there becomes more complex. In A.D. 50, the first emperor of Later Han had permitted a branch of the Hsiung-nu to settle inside the Great Wall.[49] In effect, this meant that he had ceded the territory to them, although in Chinese eyes the area remained a part of the empire. During the reign of Ling-ti the arrangement caused no trouble, and in fact it was cavalry of these Hsiung-nu that fought on the emperor's side against the Hsien-pi and the Wu-huan in 177. Toward the very end of the reign, however, succession troubles arose within the leadership of the Hsiung-nu, and one of their leaders who lost this struggle appealed in vain for the emperor's help. Disillusioned, he joined local Chinese rebels, and was with them when the emperor died.

Farther west and to the south lay an area inhabited by Chinese and another foreign people, the Ch'iang. Although this people did not at the time inhabit Tibet, they are often called "proto-Tibetans" in Western literature.[50] During Ling-ti's reign, the Ch'iang were more warlike than the Hsiung-nu. In A.D. 184, in the wake of the Yellow Turban rebellion, the Ch'iang and a number of Chinese rose up against the empire. Their rebellion spread and twice threatened the old capital, Ch'ang-an (in 185 and 187).

At one point the situation looked so hopeless that the minister of finance advised the emperor to abandon the whole area affected by the rebellion, but in March 189, two months before the emperor's death, the court scored

47 *HHC* 23, f. 5a (p. 271). This statement is not found in *Hou-Han shu*.
48 *HHS* 8, p. 339; *HHS* 89, p. 2964.
49 See Chapter 3 above, p. 267; and Chapter 6 below, pp. 398f.
50 See Chapter 6 below, pp. 422f.

a victory of sorts against a combined army of Ch'iang and Chinese.[51] Unfortunately, the victory merely caused the rebel forces to split into three groups; one of the Chinese rebels then styled himself king and would not be dislodged for another thirty years.

In the southern provinces, the Chinese lived intermingled with yet other foreign peoples often called collectively the Man. Relations with them too were frequently strained to the point of war. From 178 until 181 there was a protracted struggle, which was finally won by the court. In the remaining years of Ling-ti's reign trouble flared up now and then, but by the time of his death the situation was fairly peaceful.[52]

It was not often that Chinese farmers and soldiers rebelled solely out of desperation. In A.D. 170, 186, and 187 there were three such uprisings, but even in these cases one cannot be sure that the rebellions did not have another, ulterior motive.[53] It was the rebellions that did rest on such ulterior motives which were most devastating to the empire. Such rebellions are sometimes called "religious rebellions" because the aims of the rebels were not only political, but also religious in nature. In contemporary Chinese thinking, the dynasty, though not always the actual reigning emperor, represented a cosmic force. Here, it matters little what cosmic force was understood; to some the dynasty was the living representation of the element called "fire," and its sway was uncontested as long as "fire" ruled the world. To others, the dynasty represented the verification of old prognostications, written down in strange, esoteric books. Had not Confucius himself foreseen that the Han would come to power three centuries after his death?[54] Even for the more literal-minded, the dynasty, by its very existence, proved to be Heaven-willed, and as long as no one convinced them that Heaven's will had changed, they would put up with the existing ruling house.

With a variation on an old French saying, the prime maxim of Chinese politics is *Il ne faut pas manger à l'empereur* (One should not nibble at the emperor). The Chinese themselves put it differently: "Dethronement and enthronement are weighty affairs quite beyond the power of ordinary men."[55] However powerful a general or minister might become, it was useless to set up a new dynasty as long as there was not yet enough demonstrable cosmic backing for the venture. Success itself was taken as a sign of Heaven's approval, but it was approval of an equivocal nature; for it

51 *HHS* 8, pp. 350, 352; *HHS* 72, p. 2320; *HHS* 87, p. 2898.

52 *HHS* 8, pp. 340, 345; *HHS* 86, p. 2839. 53 *HHS* 8, pp. 332, 352, 354.

54 For these theories and their implications, see Chapter 3 above, p. 230. For the allusion to Confucius, see *HHS* 30B, p. 1067; and Tjan Tjoe Som, *Po hu t'ung: The comprehensive discussions in the White Tiger Hall* (Leiden, 1949, 1952), Vol. I, pp. 113, 115–17.

55 *HHS* 74A, p. 2375 (de Crespigny, *Last of the Han*, p. 60).

could either mean approval of the person himself, or, as some took it, approval of one's services to the dynasty. More proof was needed to show that Heaven really willed a new dynasty.

For some, this proof consisted of signs and miracles; for others, of new prophecies; for others still, it was metaphysical theories and calculations that provided proof. In short, in order to proclaim a new dynasty, one had to possess (or to fabricate) cosmic backing, proving in some way or other that the days of the Han were over. Conversely, when a new dynasty was indeed proclaimed, one could be sure that there was demonstrable cosmic backing. It is in this latter case that so-called "religious rebellions" come into the picture.

"Religious rebellion" is the translation of a term, *yao-tsei*, that occurs for the first time in Chinese historiography in connection with the year A.D. 132.[56] A literal translation of this term is "magic rebels," but from the little information we possess it appears that what is actually meant is "rebels who use signs and miracles in order to support their cause." What the signs and miracles were the historian hardly ever bothers to specify, but the cause for which the rebels stood is known to us in a large number of cases. What the "magic rebels" wanted was a new emperor – not from the house of Han, but from their own ranks. In other words, they wanted a change of dynasty. This became increasingly apparent after 144, when the dynastic succession in Lo-yang was quite openly manipulated by Liang Chi (d. 159), the general-in-chief. He poisoned one Han emperor and set up another, Huan-ti. Perhaps in response to this, we see three rebel emperors proclaimed in the one year 145, and in 147, 148, 150, 154, 165, 166, 172, 187, and 188 a further nine rebel emperors were set up, often with huge support.[57]

We also know of a few instances when plots were hatched against the throne – in 147, in 161, in 178, and in 188. The titles of these rebel emperors reveal that they saw themselves as founders of a new era, or as the fulfilment of a cosmic-religious process. We have two Yellow Emperors, in 145 and in 148, and we may presume that the rebels who produced these emperors thought that the reign of fire, and its color red, was over, and that a new era, that of earth and yellow, had now begun.[58] In 145 we find a Black Emperor, who probably inaugurated the rule of water and its color black. We have an Emperor of the Great Beginning in 154; an Emperor Supreme in 165; a Grand Emperor in 166; and a Yang-ming Emperor (which may mean Emperor of the Light of the Sun) in 172.

56 *HHS* 6, p. 260.

57 For Huan-ti's accession, see Chapter 3 above, p. 286. For the self-styled emperors, see *HHS* 7, pp. 277, 279, 291, 293, 296, 300, 316; *HHS* 8, pp. 334, 354, 356. 58 See pp. 360f. below.

The rebellion that produced this latter emperor was the first "magic rebellion" of Ling-ti's reign. We do not know what theory these rebels had; we only know that it took the court three years to suppress the upstart rival. Religion, however, is difficult to stamp out with weapons, and in the same period that this rebellion was raging in southern China (172–175), a family of physicians was impressing the local population with miracle cures in northern China. Disease, they taught, is the result of sin, and if one confesses one's guilt, health will return. The leader of this sect of healers was called Chang Chüeh (d. 184), and at some time during his activities he adopted the idea that it was up to him to supplant the dynasty.

To this end, he began to organize his followers into units, and to urge them on with promises of a better world, a world of great peace, to come. "When a new cycle of sixty years begins, great fortune will come to the world," he prophesied, thus committing himself to the year 184, when, by traditional reckoning, such a cycle would start again.[59] Such plots could not remain secret, and as early as 181 the minister of finance had written to the emperor that apparently there was some movement afoot, and that he should try to disperse the followers of Chang Chüeh by peaceful means, since otherwise they might be stirred into action. Soon after the letter was written, however, a fire broke out in the imperial harem, the minister of finance was dismissed to atone for this sign of Heaven's wrath, and the matter was left in abeyance.[60]

Chang Chüeh could proceed with his plans, and the date of the uprising – which was to occur at various places on the same day – was set for 3 April 184. Just before this date, one of Chang Chüeh's followers got cold feet and denounced the plot and its details to the throne. When the emperor ordered further investigation, Chang Chüeh realized that he could not wait until the agreed date.[61]

When the court's investigation implicated hundreds of people, including palace guards who believed in the teachings of Chang Chüeh, there may have been surprise; there was, however, outright shock when news arrived that rebellions had broken out simultaneously in no fewer than sixteen commanderies, stretching in a broad belt south, east, and northeast of the capital. This was the Yellow Turban rebellion. Everywhere the com-

59 *HHS* 71, p. 2299. This passage refers to the "great fortune" (*ta-chi*) that will attend the inauguration of the new cycle. *TCTC* 58, p. 1864 uses the expression "great peace," *t'ai-p'ing*; see also *San-kuo chih* 8 (Wei 8), p. 264 note 1. For the concept and significance of *t'ai-p'ing*, see Anna K. Seidel, "The image of the perfect ruler in early Taoist messianism: Lao-tzu and Li Hung," *History of Religions*, 9:2–3 (1969–70), 217f.; and Chapter 16 below, pp. 814f.

60 *HHS* 8, pp. 345–46; *HHS* 54, p. 1784; *HHS* 57, p. 1849; Rafe de Crespigny, *The biography of Sun Chien* (Canberra, 1966), pp. 24f. 61 *HHS* 71, p. 2300.

mandery armies were defeated, important cities were captured, kings were kidnapped, and many imperial officials took the safest way out: they fled.

Oddly enough, we do not know when the rebellion broke out. We only know it must have been on a day in March 184, for the first reaction of the court is dated 1 April 184. The empress's half-brother, Ho Chin (d. 189), was given the title and authority of general-in-chief. The palace guards and the standing army were put temporarily under his command "in order to preserve the calm in the capital."[62] In the countryside, a first line of defense was laid south of the capital, where eight newly created commandants guarded strategic posts. Finally, the court selected three officials to take the campaign into the countryside, one to the north, two to the south.

We know the course of these campaigns in great detail. Here, however, it must suffice to say that the Yellow Turbans were defeated during February 185. But the court did not profit from its victory for long. Within two months, new rebellions, spawned by the Yellow Turban movement though not necessarily with its religious basis, broke out time and again. Some had fanciful names (Black Mountain, White Wave), some called themselves plainly Yellow Turban.[63] In the end this wave of rebellions proved too much for the court, and the Black Mountain rebels were given the status of local officials, with permission to send in candidates for appointment. When it turned out that this was not enough, the court sent a private army under a warlord against them, as the court's own army was apparently powerless.

The impact of the Yellow Turban rebellion on military and civil administration has already been shown. In A.D. 188, there was a further massive uprising in what is now Szechwan province, but although its leader called himself a Yellow Turban and took the title Son of Heaven, there is no known connection between the real Yellow Turbans in eastern China and this rebellion in the west.[64] This latter rebellion, too, had to be fought by private armies, and it is possible that it was this circumstance that prompted the court to change its local administration and to appoint plenipotentiary regional commissioners.

If it was not this rebellion, then it was a more long-lasting rebellion in the north that prompted the court to appoint the commissioners. In 187, a Chinese ex-official succeeded in convincing several chiefs of the Wu-huan people that the Chinese were treating them badly and so incited them to revolt, with himself as their leader. The ex-official too declared himself to

62 *HHS* 8, p. 348; *HHS* 69, p. 2246.
63 *HHS* 8, p. 351; *HHS* 9, pp. 383–84; *HHS* 71, pp. 2310f.
64 *HHS* 8, p. 356; *HHS* 75, p. 2432.

be a new Son of Heaven, and in this case it was a commissioner who finally put things right in April 189, just a few weeks before Ling-ti died.[65]

Culture and scholarship under Ling-ti

Many more details could be added to the picture of Ling-ti's reign. There were earthquakes, droughts, floods, locusts, caterpillars, epidemics, and hail storms. The court reacted by proclaiming amnesties and rebates of taxes, by distributing medicine, and by ordering prayers for rain. In the heavens there were eclipses and comets, while on earth there was an extraordinary series of freaks: a horse giving birth to a human child, a virgin giving birth to a baby with two heads and four arms, plants suddenly adopting the shape of an animal, chickens changing into cocks, and snakes, tigers, and madmen sneaking in and out of the palace.[66] In the popular stories that grew up around the fall of the Han, these freaks and strange happenings are fondly enumerated as omens of the imminent collapse of the dynasty.

There was no lack of building activity, although we hear equally often of fires ravaging palaces or of walls suddenly collapsing. An observation tower was built, four bronze men and four bronze bells were cast, new money was issued. On the happy side, there were magic mushrooms, phoenixes, and in the year preceding the Yellow Turban rebellions, the sources say there was a bumper harvest. Several outlying countries came to offer tribute to the Chinese Son of Heaven, thus proving his influence in civilizing the world.[67] The emperor himself, however, is said to have been addicted to all things barbarian: clothes, food, music, dances, and furniture.

Perhaps the most important scholar of the reign was Ts'ai Yung (133–192), and the most important scholarly event of the era was the erection in the capital of stone slabs inscribed with the correct text of the classics. This project was ordered in A.D. 175 and completed in 183, Ts'ai Yung being one of the main executors of this enormous task. Fragments of the Han Stone Classics still survive.[68]

If we have devoted a lot of attention to the world of Ling-ti, it is because his reign was the last stable period of Han rule. This was the world that people remembered, that they wanted to re-create in whole or in part; it was also the world that refused to come to life again. When Ling-ti closed

65 *HHS* 8, pp. 354–57; *HHS* 73, p. 2353; *HHS* 89, p. 2964; *HHS* 90, p. 2984.
66 For example, see *HHS* 8, pp. 352, 354. For other reports of these events, see *HHS* (tr.) 12 and 13–18.
67 *HHS* 8, pp. 347, 353; *HHS* 78, p. 2537.
68 For Ts'ai Yung, see *HHS* 60B, pp. 1979f.; *HHS* 78, p. 2533; *HHS* 79A, p. 2558; Tsuen-hsuin Tsien, *Written on bamboo and silk: The beginnings of Chinese books and inscriptions* (Chicago and London, 1962), pp. 74f.; Ma Heng, *Han shih-ching chi-ts'un* (Peking, 1957).

his eyes on 13 May 189, in a sense it was the whole traditional empire that died with him, although this was not immediately apparent.

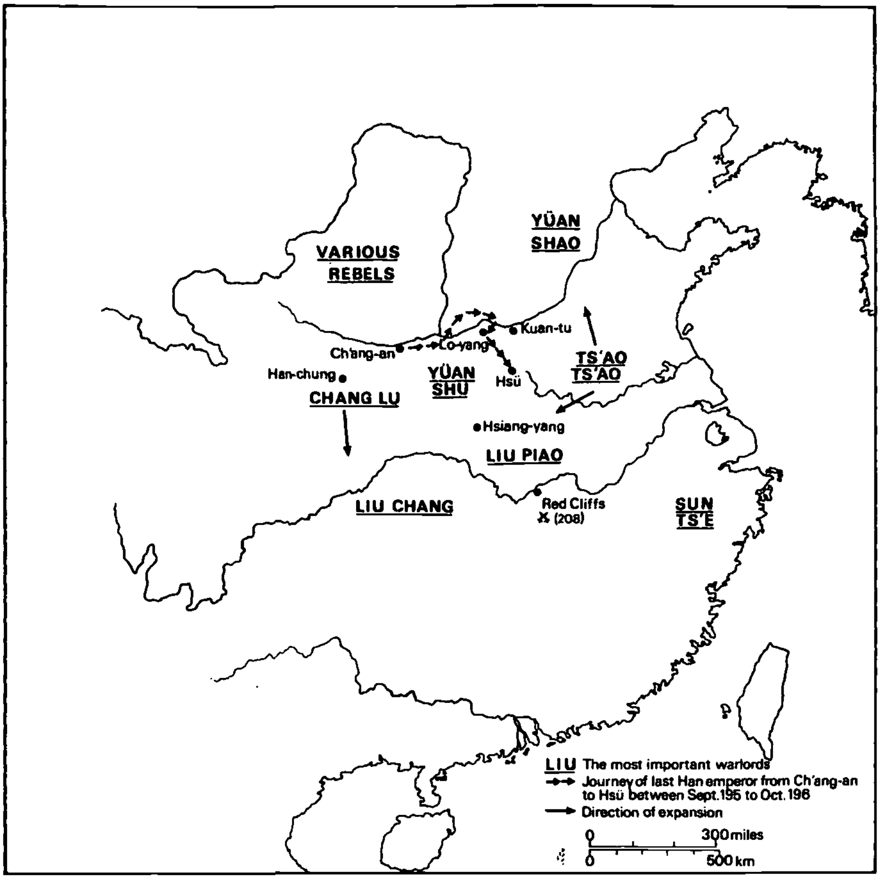
THE COLLAPSE OF DYNASTIC POWER

The somewhat complex series of events in which the Han dynasty came to an end may be summarized in the following terms. The leading families and officials massacred the eunuchs, but lost the emperor. Tung Cho then manipulated the imperial succession, and in the east a coalition was formed against him. Thanks to its pressure, the Han emperor and Tung Cho were driven westward, but the coalition broke up with its members destroying one another until only seven remained. Meanwhile, Tung Cho had died, and the Han emperor was wandering over the face of the earth until he was received by Ts'ao Ts'ao. Ts'ao Ts'ao then overcame all but two of his rivals, and his son set himself up as emperor of Wei in place of the Han emperor. His two rivals claimed equal rank, and for forty years China was to have three emperors.

The Ho family takes control

The reign of Ling-ti was a period of challenge and change, and when he died in May 189, he bequeathed to his successor an inherently unstable government. Any successor would immediately be the focal point of powerful conflicting interests: those of the eunuch establishment, of the empress's family, of regional governors with armies, of the career bureaucrats, and of the mother of Ling-ti. Meanwhile, among the population the very legitimacy of the dynasty was in doubt, as may be witnessed in the religious rebellions, especially that of the Yellow Turbans.

Who was to succeed Ling-ti? There were two candidates, his elder son Liu Pien, thirteen years old, and his younger son, Liu Hsieh, eight years old. The first was the favorite of the empress' party, while the latter was the protégé of Ling-ti's mother and in the care of Chien Shih, the eunuch commander-in-chief. For one day after Ling-ti's death the issue hung in the balance, but on 15 May Liu Pien mounted the throne. His mother received the title empress dowager and assumed the regency. A new grand tutor was found in the person of Yüan Wei (d. 190), a member of the noble Yüan family, and he together with the general-in-chief Ho Chin, the empress dowager's half-brother, took control of the secretariat. The boy Liu Hsieh was taken from Chien Shih and given the title prince. Chien Shih, uneasy about the situation but still commander-in-chief of the Army of the Western Garden, tried to unite the eunuchs in a plot against Ho Chin. The plot



Map 14. Contending warlords, ca. A.D. 200

leaked out; Chien Shih was arrested and executed on 27 May, and his troops came under the command of Ho Chin.[69]

The Ho family was now in control, and moved quickly against the mother of Ling-ti. Within six weeks this lady lost first her right of residence in the palace; then her nephew, the general of the agile cavalry, who committed suicide under pressure from Ho Chin; and finally her own life on 7 July, suddenly dying from grief and fear.[70]

With these opponents out of the way, the basic issue still remained: what was to become of the eunuchs? In the drama that unfolded during the summer months, there were four major participants: Yüan Shao (d.

69 *HHS* 8, p. 357; *HHS* 9, p. 367; *HHS* 69, pp. 2247f.; de Crespigny, *Last of the Han*, pp. 44f.; de Crespigny, *Biography of Sun Chien*, pp. 13f. 70 *HHS* 10B, p. 447.

202), one of the colonels of the Army of the Western Garden, a member of the Yüan family, and an enemy of the eunuchs; Ho Chin, who was not sympathetic to the eunuchs but who had to take into consideration the wishes of his half-sister, the empress dowager, and who wavered and delayed; the empress dowager, who was not willing to sacrifice the eunuchs because that would make herself and the emperor virtual captives of Ho Chin and Yüan Shao; and finally the eunuchs themselves, who had no resources but their own wit and the empress dowager's support. In the background was the hovering presence of Tung Cho, who still lay encamped with his troops some 80 miles northwest of the capital.

The events of 168 were uppermost in everybody's mind; at that time Tou Wu had faced a similar situation, had similarly wavered, and in doing so had lost his life. Yüan Shao was determined that this situation should not be repeated, and he constantly urged Ho Chin on, reminding him of Tou Wu and telling him he should not let this chance slip. Ho Chin spoke to his half-sister and received the more or less standard answer, that the eunuchs were to remain in their positions. Some other members of the Ho family, notably Ho Chin's brother Ho Miao and his mother, were bribed by the eunuchs and thus spoke in their favor; this strengthened the empress dowager's resolve not to give in.[71]

The appeal for outside help and the massacre of the eunuchs

Up to this point, the situation looked like a replay of the Tou Wu crisis, but at this juncture Yüan Shao introduced a new factor in the equation. The eunuchs, he argued, had to go, and the sole obstacle to their removal was the empress dowager. In order to force her to change her mind, troops were needed. With Ho Chin's approval, he called on several private army commanders to lead their troops toward the capital. Ho Chin himself had an even better idea: he asked Tung Cho, general of the van, whose troops lay 80 miles northwest of the capital, to advance toward Lo-yang.[72] Then he sent one of his own men with troops away to the countryside and villages around the capital, with orders to ravage, plunder, and burn. The fires could be seen from the city, but still the empress dowager refused to dismiss the eunuchs. Ho Chin's brother even suggested to Ho Chin that he had better make his peace with the eunuchs; did the Ho family not owe its prominence to those eunuchs who had helped their half-sister to attain and keep the position first of empress, now of empress dowager?

Ho Chin wavered again. He sent messengers to stop Tung Cho's advanc-

71 *HHS* 69, pp. 2248f. 72 *HHS* 69, p. 2250; *HHS* 72, p. 2322.

ing armies, and Tung Cho reluctantly complied with the order. On the other hand, he had Yüan Shao appointed to a position which gave him judicial powers within the capital district, and Yüan Shao, in his turn, urged Tung Cho and the leaders of the private armies to send in memorial after memorial against the eunuchs. This psychological war had brief success. At one point, the empress dowager did indeed dismiss all the eunuchs, but they used the influence of other members of the Ho family to have the order rescinded. This was the situation when 22 September 189 dawned.

At the levee that day there was a somewhat unexpected visitor, whose presence made the eunuchs nervous: Ho Chin, who had said that he was ill, was apparently well enough to come to court with a request. The eunuchs managed to have the conversation between the empress dowager and Ho Chin repeated to them by an informer, and were as shocked as the other eunuchs had been twenty-one years earlier when they learned the contents of Tou Wu's memorial: Ho Chin was asking for the execution of all eunuchs.

At this point, just as twenty-one years previously, it was the eunuchs' capacity for improvisation, teamwork, and quick action that set the tone of events. The empress dowager had undoubtedly refused Ho Chin's request, and when Ho Chin left the palace the eunuchs called him back, saying that the empress dowager had something more to tell him. Meanwhile, they had gathered weapons and men behind the antechamber to the empress dowager's apartments. When Ho Chin was seated on the floor, waiting for the moment when his half-sister would call him in, the chief eunuch, Chang Jang, the very person who had invented some of the more spectacular of Ling-ti's financial schemes,[73] made a quick last-moment apology for himself and the eunuchs in general. He said that first, the chaos in the empire was not their fault, and second, that the eunuchs had saved the empress dowager when Ling-ti was on the brink of deposing her in 181; for these reasons the Ho family should be grateful. That was the last thing that Ho Chin heard, for his head was thereupon chopped off. Next the eunuchs composed an edict dismissing Yüan Shao. The imperial secretaries refused to copy it out, requesting an interview with the general-in-chief first. For an answer Ho Chin's head was tossed to them, and this apparently persuaded them to comply.

Now that the general-in-chief was dead, there was a problem. In contrast with the situation twenty-one years earlier, there were no generals or troops in the capital who were loyal to the eunuchs. This was perhaps the crucial

73 For Chang Jang, see *HHS* 78, pp. 2534f.

difference between the situations in 168 and in 189, and it turned out to be fatal for the eunuchs. When news of Ho-Chin's death reached the Yüan family, Yüan Shao's first reaction was to kill the person appointed by the eunuchs to replace him. Then he led troops toward the Northern Palace. In the meantime Yüan Shu (d. 199), Yüan Shao's half-brother, had led troops to the Southern Palace, and fighting broke out between him and eunuchs defending this palace. Fighting continued until the sun went down, but then Yüan Shu set fire to a palace gate in order to smoke out the eunuchs.[74]

The fire had more effect than was perhaps intended. Not only did the eunuchs flee toward the Northern Palace by way of the covered passageway between the two palaces, but they took with them their only security: the empress dowager, the new emperor, and the latter's half-brother, Liu Hsieh. In the melee, however, the empress dowager escaped. The empress dowager could not know that she was now almost the only person of her family who was still alive; her other half-brother, who still held the rank of general of the chariots and cavalry, and who was reportedly in the eunuchs' pay, had just been killed in front of the Northern Palace, with the connivance of Yüan Shao. In this way the Ho family was removed from the scene. Chao Chung, the eunuch whom Ling-ti had called his "mother," perished on the same day as the empress dowager's half-brother.[75]

The scene of the fighting now shifted to the Northern Palace, where the eunuchs held the emperor and his half-brother. On 25 September, Yüan Shao broke into the palace compound and let his soldiers kill every eunuch in sight, reportedly over two thousand men. But their prize, the eunuch Chang Jang, escaped them, and fled from the palace with the new emperor and his half-brother, out of the city and toward the Yellow River. The other party followed in hot pursuit. Near the river they met, and finally Chang Jang jumped into the water and drowned. Thus were the eunuchs removed once and for all from the political scene.[76]

The emergence of Tung Cho

With the eunuchs out of the way and the emperor at large in the countryside, the outstanding question was that of who would fill the power vacuum. This could not be the Ho family, because all its male members were dead. Nor, as it turned out, would it be the Yüan family. It was Tung Cho who had seen the fires in the capital from afar and who had hurried with his troops to take his part of the spoils. In the capital, where he arrived on

74 *HHS* 8, p. 358; *HHS* 69, p. 2252. For Yüan Shu, see *HHS* 75, pp. 2438f.
75 *HHS* 78, pp. 2534, 2537.
76 *HHS* 8, p. 358; *HHS* 69, p. 2252; *HHS* 78, p. 2537; *SKC* 6 (Wei 6), p. 189.

25 September, he learned that the emperor was supposed to be in the mountains somewhere north of the city. Taking, or even forcing, the senior officials of the state to accompany him, he went in search of the emperor. But when the two finally met, the encounter was somewhat chilly. The young emperor was afraid of Tung Cho's troops, and when Tung Cho tried to get the emperor to explain to him what had happened, he could not get a clear answer.

Tung Cho then questioned the young emperor's half-brother, Liu Hsieh, and learned the whole story. It appeared that they had wandered on foot through the night and finally found an open cart at some commoner's house, on which they had ridden to this encounter.[77] This story was later embroidered by storytellers, and in their tales of the end of the empire it came to stand for the nadir of the emperorship.

From this point onward, an important aspect of the historical process is the uphill struggle of the court to regain at least a semblance of control, moral or military, and preferably both. In the process, however, military force and moral authority came to be divided among different persons. The final abdication in 220 of the last Han emperor in favor of Ts'ao P'i (A.D. 186–226) can be seen, in this respect, as an effort to combine the two sources of power again in one person; the effort, however, was only partially successful.

But to carry the story back to 25 September 189. When Tung Cho returned to Lo-yang with the emperor and the prince, he faced a difficult situation. He had no formal standing in court; compared with the Yüan family he was a nobody, and the number of his troops was not particularly impressive. To deal with these weak points, he resorted to intimidation and ruse, while outwardly maintaining all the semblances of legality. Yüan Shao was browbeaten and fled on 26 September; great scholars, including Ts'ai Yung, were intimidated into joining his government.[78] In strictly legal terms he obtained the post of minister of works; and he cited old and venerable precedents for his plan to depose the young emperor, who had made a bad impression on him, and to enthrone Liu Hsieh, his half-brother, instead.

This last plan encountered more opposition than he perhaps expected, but he was determined and swept away all counterarguments. On 28 September he forced the empress dowager to depose the emperor and to set up Liu Hsieh in his stead. This done, he removed the empress dowager from the court and arranged for her death two days later.[79]

77 *HHS* 8, p. 358; *HHS* 72, p. 2323; de Crespigny, *Last of the Han*, pp. 54f.
78 *HHS* 60B, p. 2005. 79 *HHS* 9, p. 367; *HHS* 10B, p. 450; *HHS* 72, p. 2324.

It is not easy to understand why Tung Cho did all this. It is possible that he wanted to imitate one of the most prominent statesmen of the Han dynasty, Huo Kuang (d. 68 B.C.), the only one who ever successfully deposed one emperor and set up another, 263 years before Tung Cho's time.[80] It is possible that he wanted to appoint an emperor who was totally his own creature. He may have had sentimental reasons too, but one thing is sure: Tung Cho had "nibbled at the emperor," and from now on he found that the court was more of a liability than an asset.

The coalition in the east

It is convenient to shift our attention at this moment away from Tung Cho's court and toward the area east of the capital. In this area opposition against Tung Cho began to build up, fanned by some important refugees from the capital. Foremost among these were Yüan Shao, who had fled very soon after Tung Cho's entry into the capital; Yüan Shu (d. 199), his half-brother, who fled later in 189; and Ts'ao Ts'ao (155–220), one of the colonels of the Army of the Western Garden, who also fled toward the end of 189. They were joined by a host of commanders, soldiers of fortune, and officials and ex-officials of the dynasty, who formed a loose coalition with one purpose uniting them. The usurper Tung Cho should be defeated, since he had manipulated the succession and could therefore easily be branded a disloyal subject.

What was to happen after Tung Cho's defeat was less certain; perhaps there were vague plans to restore the young ex-emperor to his throne. This deposed emperor was a burden on Tung Cho, for he could easily become the focal point of loyalist sentiments, and Tung Cho had him killed on 3 March of the next year. Two months later, he had his revenge on the Yüan family. The grand tutor, Yüan Wei, who was still in the capital, was killed by him with all the remaining members of the Yüan family on 10 May; reconciliation was forever impossible.[81]

Meanwhile, pressure from the east had been mounting, and the presence of the emperor in Lo-yang began to affect Tung Cho's chances for counterattack. If he left the capital, another party could capture the emperor and proclaim Tung Cho a rebel against the dynasty; if he remained in Lo-yang, his enemies would have relatively free play; taking the court along on his campaigns would be far too cumbersome. A compromise solution was found in the plan to send the emperor away from the belligerents to the

80 For Huo Kuang, see Michael Loewe, *Crisis and conflict in Han China* (London, 1974), pp. 66f., 113f.; and Chapter 2 above, pp. 178f. 81 *HHS* 9, pp. 369f.; *SKC* 1 (Wei 1), pp. 5f.

relative quiet in the west of the empire, where Tung Cho probably had his greatest regional following.

The inevitable opposition against this unusual plan was crushed. On 4 April 190 the boy emperor and his court were sent away to the west, to the old capital of Ch'ang-an, still an important city although it had not been a capital for some 150 years. This "shift of the capital westward" as the Chinese call it, was in fact an enormous migration, because willy-nilly thousands of people followed the emperor, ravaging and pillaging for food, and harried by Tung Cho's soldiers. They formed a miserable throng who could have no hope of a return to Lo-yang, which was burned to the ground by Tung Cho.[82]

At this point it is convenient to add a note about our sources. The confused period that followed is known to us in great detail. The sources do not shirk from describing the innermost feelings and the most secret conversations of the many interesting persons who now came to the fore. On the other hand, the sources also describe how the silken scrolls contained in the imperial library and archives were cut up and used as bags or canopies when the emperor moved to Ch'ang-an, and how the majority of the books and state documents that were saved from this barbarism were nevertheless lost in the confusion.[83]

Once in Ch'ang-an, the court was in no position to gather and store away documents, and even if it did, they were not taken along when the emperor made his hazardous journey back to Lo-yang, five and a half years later. It is important to remember that most of the information that has come to us from these troubled times derives from partisan sources. When it comes from the person concerned, it naturally exaggerates his good qualities and excellent plans; when it comes from his enemies, it dwells on the other's cruelty, stupidity, or unworthiness. To avoid misrepresentation due to a dazzling array of plots, stratagems, victories, and defeats, we attempt here, with the full advantage of hindsight, to present only the bare outlines of the events that followed.[84]

The eclipse of the Han court

The disappearance of the emperor from Lo-yang gave Tung Cho a brief respite and weakened the resolve of the coalition against him. There were

82 *HHS* 9, pp. 369f.; *SKC* 1 (Wei 1), p. 7. For the destruction that Tung Cho brought about in Lo-yang, see *HHS* 72, pp. 2325f.; Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," p. 89. 83 *HHS* 79A, p. 2548.

84 For the complexities of the historiography of this stage, see Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. I, *BMFEA*, 26 (1954), 21f.; and Rafe de Crespigny, *The records of the Three Kingdoms* (Canberra, 1970). Many of the sources for this period derive from privately compiled accounts designed to serve the ambitions of prominent individuals.

peace overtures, followed by surprise attacks. Among the coalition there was talk of appointing an emperor of their own, and gradually its members began to fall out. Nevertheless, attacks by the coalition eventually forced Tung Cho to retreat westward, and he joined the emperor in Ch'ang-an in May 191. A year later he was killed, and the emperor passed through an extraordinary number of hands in the four years that followed.[85]

During those years, his influence on the affairs of China as a whole was restricted to one fact: his existence as the legally uncontested bearer of the imperial title successfully prevented any of the warlords from taking this title for themselves. Otherwise he was without influence. He kept up the semblance of a court, which was replete with senior officials, and in May 195 he married. In August 195 he fled from Ch'ang-an, and after an eventful and hazardous journey that took a year, he reached Lo-yang, his first capital, in August 196.[86]

In his empire, the situation was chaotic. A traveler passing through China in those days would come across numerous warlords, rebels, and independent local officials, some of whom had been in office since Ling-ti's time (168–189), while others had been nobodies until recently. The situation did not remain stable for more than a few months, and the general of today might well be tomorrow's corpse. Nevertheless, as the period progressed, the contours of an eightfold division of the empire became visible.

In the northeast there was Yüan Shao; south of him Ts'ao Ts'ao; southwest of the latter and due south of the capital, Yüan Shu (d. 199); due south of the latter, Liu Piao (144–208), who owed his appointment to Tung Cho; east of Liu Piao, and filling in the space of southeastern China, was the brilliant young warlord Sun Ts'e (175–200).[87] These five men more or less occupied the eastern half of the empire.

In the western half, we have in the southern part Liu Chang (d. ca. 223), whose father had been appointed as a regional commissioner in 188 by Ling-ti. North of Liu Chang's territory, the area known as Liang was divided among rebels who had first risen up against Ling-ti in 184. Wedged between these rebels and Liu Chang lay the strange enclave called Han-chung, which was ruled by a religious leader, Chang Lu.

In this enclave, every believer paid five pecks of grain or rice to his religious superiors, who in turn provided safety and cured disease by making the patient confess his sins. Although this latter practice is reminiscent of the Yellow Turbans, there are no known connections between the Yellow

85 *HHS* 9, pp. 371f.; *HHS* 72, pp. 2329f.; de Crespigny, *Last of the Han*, pp. 90f.

86 *HHS* 9, pp. 377–79; *HHS* 10B, p. 452.

87 For Sun Ts'e, see *HHS* 9, pp. 377f.; and *SKC* 46 (Wu 1), pp. 1101f. For Yüan Shao and Liu Piao, see *HHS* 74B, pp. 2409–18, 2419–25. For Yüan Shu, see *HHS* 75, pp. 2438–44.

Turbans and the Five Pecks of Grain. This movement had grown up independently in the general area of Han-chung, its roots going back to the reign of Shun-ti (A.D. 125–144), if we are to believe the least exaggerated of our sources.[88] In the years prior to A.D. 196, control over the movement had been wrested from a family of patriarchs and passed into the hands of Chang Lu (fl. 190–215) who, it seems, added a few touches to the religious teachings and practices, and who built up a veritable hierarchy with which to govern his lands. On the political side, it is important to realize that trouble was brewing between Chang Lu and his southern neighbor, Liu Chang. On the other side of China, Yüan Shao, Ts'ao Ts'ao, and Yüan Shu had also become enemies.

The court in Ts'ao Ts'ao's hands (A.D. 196–200)

With the emperor in Lo-yang, a situation such as had obtained in the last phase of the Chou period, five or six centuries earlier, could be repeated. The Han emperor, just like the last of the Sons of Heaven of the house of Chou, might conceivably have remained in the capital without any power, performing only ritual duties, while the warlords fought it out between themselves. The Han emperor, however, stood at the apex of a cosmic-religious system far more complex than any that had obtained in the Chou period. Despite some hesitation, emperorship had come under question, and the duration of the dynasty had become the subject of prognostication and speculation. It could be asked whether, as the Chinese put it, it was a time when the "deer was loose" and the first person to catch it would become emperor.[89] Alternatively, it could be asked whether this was a time when emperorship could pass only peaceably from one dynasty to the next, with one distinguished but exhausted line of sovereigns giving the title of its own free will to its most deserving subject. Or else, as some may have thought, the Han dynasty was going through a periodic decline from which it would rise to be more resplendent, and to continue its perpetual rule over the world.

With emperorship as the focal point of such powerful theories, the presence of the real emperor could not remain without consequences for the warlords who were nearest to him: Yüan Shao, Ts'ao Ts'ao, and Yüan Shu. These three men had personal loyalties to the dynasty, and owed their present positions in part to the former emperor (Ling-ti). Apparently, Yüan

88 *HHS* 8, p. 349 note 1; *HHS* 75, p. 2435; and Chapter 16 below, pp. 814f.

89 For the use of this metaphor, see Pan Piao's essay "The destiny of kings": *HS* 100A, p. 4209 (William Theodore de Bary et al., *Sources of Chinese tradition* [New York and London, 1960], Vol. I, pp. 177–78).

Shao was the first to hear the news that the court was traveling in his direction. He pondered on the possibility of receiving the emperor in his own camp but decided against it, probably because the disadvantages of such a situation had been exaggerated to him. Ts'ao Ts'ao was next to hear, but he saw more advantages than disadvantages.

When the emperor and empress arrived in Lo-yang in August 196, Ts'ao Ts'ao cajoled the court with a mixture of promises and threats to repair to his own base, the city of Hsü, where the party arrived on 16 October 196. Yüan Shu was bypassed, and when he realized that Ts'ao Ts'ao would never let the captive emperor go, he tried to establish his own dynasty in 197. This, however, made a bad impression. His own people began to desert him, and just before his death in 199, penniless, he tried to sell his title to Yüan Shao, though nothing came of it. By proclaiming his own dynasty, *il avait mangé à l'empereur*, and he had bitten off more than he could chew.[90]

Yüan Shu's death left the field in the northeastern quarter of the empire open to Yüan Shao and Ts'ao Ts'ao. The latter had meanwhile instituted a policy of financial stability, and to this end had set up a system whereby soldiers received plots to till in exchange for regular payment of grain as taxes to Ts'ao Ts'ao. Thus backed by the moral authority of the emperor and the regular supply of provisions, he steadily increased his influence until the decisive battle with Yüan Shao in B.C. 200, fought at Kuan-tu, roughly on the border of their two territories.[91]

The other two warlords in the eastern half of the empire, Liu Piao and Sun Ts'e, were meanwhile involved in complicated alliances and counter-alliances with both Ts'ao Ts'ao and Yüan Shao. Liu Piao managed to steer relatively clear of too close an involvement, and his capital, Hsiang-yang, grew into a veritable center of culture and peace. Sun Ts'e steadily increased his power over the southeastern quarter of China, but just before the great battle between Ts'ao Ts'ao and Yüan Shao, he died. He was twenty-five years old. His brother, Sun Ch'üan (182–252), succeeded him.[92]

In the western half of China, the quarrel between the religious leader Chang Lu and his southern neighbor Liu Chang had come out into the open, and the boundaries of the religious state had been extended southward into the territory of Liu Chang. The rebels in the northwestern corner of China more or less faded from the historian's attention, to make their reappearance in the sources only when Ts'ao Ts'ao turned his attention there in the years following his battle with Yüan Shao at Kuan-tu in 200.

90 *SKC* 1 (Wei 1), pp. 13f.; *SKC* 6 (Wei 6), pp. 194, 209.
91 *SKC* 1 (Wei 1), p. 19. 92 *SKC* 6 (Wei 6), p. 212; *SKC* 46 (Wu 1), pp. 1101–09.

Consolidation (200–208)

The battle of Kuan-tu was won by Ts'ao Ts'ao, who put Yüan Shao to flight. Yüan never regained the initiative; after his death in 202 his two sons quarrelled over the inheritance, and in 206 Ts'ao Ts'ao took over the whole area once controlled by the last descendants of the noble Yüan family. In 207 Ts'ao Ts'ao ventured even farther north and defeated a force of Wu-huan cavalry, so that the whole northeastern quarter belonged to him.[93]

At his southern border, the situation had not changed greatly. His neighbors, Sun Ch'üan in the southeast and Liu Piao in the southwest, had maintained a wary loyalty to the emperor, and by implication to Ts'ao Ts'ao. This apparent quiet was threatened when Liu Piao fell seriously ill in 208 without having a worthy successor, and it was open to question whether Ts'ao Ts'ao or Sun Ch'üan would take over his territory. There was even a third possibility. Since the beginning of the confusion after Ling-ti's death, an intrepid soldier of fortune, Liu Pei (161–223), had appeared on the scene, aiding first one, then another warlord.[94] In 208, his position was such that it was feared that he too might succeed in taking over from the dying Liu Piao.

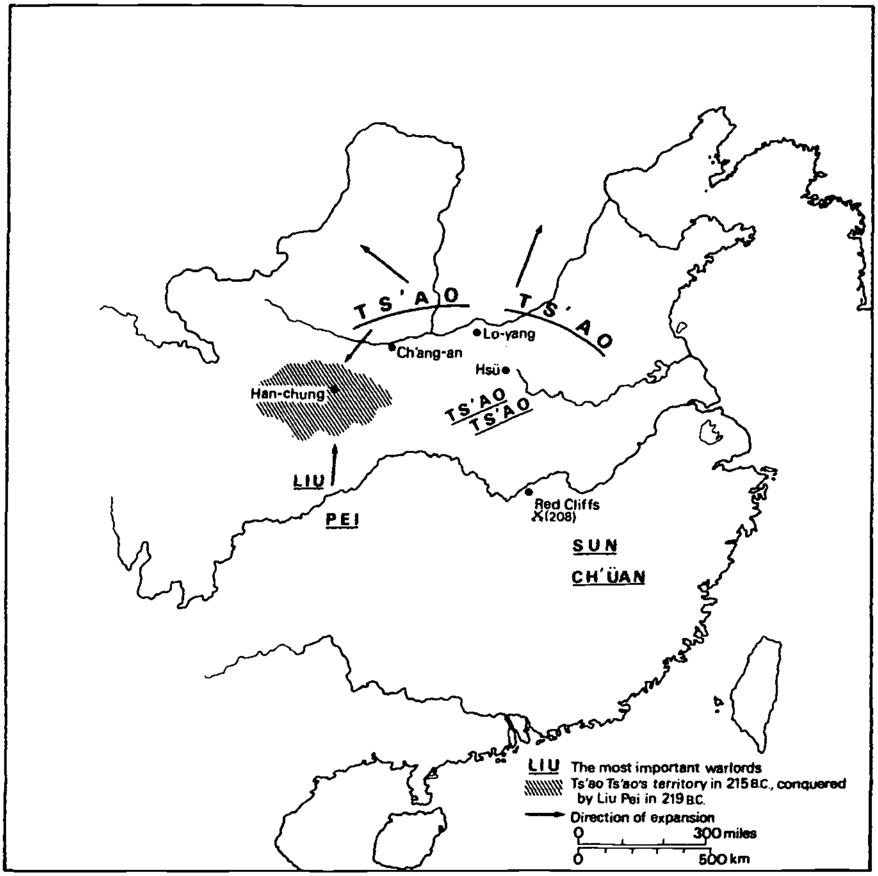
When Ts'ao Ts'ao decided to take the initiative and indeed forced Liu Piao's son to surrender his lands the other two warlords now had reason to fear that Ts'ao Ts'ao would next turn against one of them. They formed a temporary coalition, and when Ts'ao Ts'ao sailed further south, his ships were burned and his troops defeated at a place called the Red Cliffs.[95] The battle at the Red Cliffs marked the end of Ts'ao Ts'ao's southward ventures, and thus the end of an era. Henceforth the south, that is the territory in the hands of Sun Ch'üan, Liu Pei, and the other warlords farther west, was left to its own devices.

Ts'ao Ts'ao's last years (208–220)

The last years of Ts'ao Ts'ao were spent extending his power in a northwesterly direction and consolidating his position vis-à-vis the emperor. When he had tried to take over the territory of Liu Piao, he lost part of that territory in the battle of the Red Cliffs. He did, however, win the allegiance of Liu Piao's entourage, and several of the scholars and poets who had found refuge at Liu Piao's peaceful capital now flocked to Ts'ao Ts'ao to grace his administration.

Meanwhile, Ts'ao Ts'ao had effected a fundamental change in the top

93 *SKC* 1 (Wei 1), pp. 23, 28f. 94 *SKC* 32 (Shu 2), pp. 871f. 95 *SKC* 1 (Wei 1), pp. 30–31.



Map 15. Ts'ao Ts'ao's last years

structure of the imperial bureaucracy. Up to 208, the emperor had continued to maintain a nominal bureaucracy under all circumstances, the top echelons of which consisted of the three excellencies and nine ministers. Needless to say, under the circumstances the offices were no longer for sale as they had been under Ling-ti, and the emperor must at times have been happy to find anybody at all to fill these posts. In 208, however, Ts'ao Ts'ao abolished the offices of the three excellencies and replaced them by two top officials, the chancellor and the imperial secretary. For himself, he took the title of chancellor.[96]

Up to 208, relations between the Han court and Ts'ao Ts'ao's entourage had been rarher formal. Ts'ao Ts'ao had not taken exrravaganr titles. In 196

96 *SKC* 1 (Wei 1), p. 30; de Crespigny, *Last of the Han*, p. 253.

he had been appointed minister of works, concurrently charged with the office of a general of the chariots and cavalry, but he seems to have relinquished the latter title in 199. In 204 he took the additional title of regional commissioner, but this was only a formal recognition of power he already had.[97] The emperor had his own entourage, not surprisingly consisting of Han loyalists and men of conservative opinions.

It was in these circles that the theory that the dynasty was merely passing through a temporary decline was likely to find its most ardent supporters. In A.D. 200, Hsün Yüeh (148–209) produced a history of Han; its central message was that after these dark years, a restoration was to follow.[98] In the same year, the court, with or without the emperor's knowledge, plotted to have Ts'ao Ts'ao killed, probably motivated by a mistaken reading of his plans. The plot was foiled, and Ts'ao Ts'ao continued as before. In 203, however, he had an overseer appointed to keep an eye on the court bureaucracy.

After 208, Ts'ao Ts'ao set out on a policy of using his influence over the captive court to its fullest extent. In 212 he was exempted from "hurrying while approaching the emperor," a distinction usually reserved for elderly statesmen. In 213 he took the title duke of Wei, received exceptional honors, and presented three of his daughters to the emperor. In 214 he received additional honors, deposed the empress whom the emperor had married in 195, and killed the two imperial princes who had been born in the meantime. In 215 his daughter became empress; in 216 he took the title king of Wei, thereby breaking the unwritten constitution of the Han empire, which excluded everyone not of the imperial blood from holding the title of king (*wang*). In 217 additional honors were conferred on him, and it is common practice on the part of Chinese historians to imply that only his death on 15 March 220 prevented him from taking the ultimate step, that of setting himself up as emperor.[99]

This latter statement is based on a reading of Ts'ao Ts'ao's ulterior motives, and can never be wholly convincing. Ts'ao Ts'ao must have been aware that any "nibbling at the emperor" would weaken rather than further his standing in the rest of the empire. When Ts'ao Ts'ao killed the two princes in 214, the warlord Liu Pei warned him against further attacks on

97 *SKC* 1 (Wei 1), pp. 13–14, 26.

98 This history, which still exists, is called *Annals of Han* (*Han chi*). By arranging his material in such a way that the history of Former Han (and by implication of Later Han as well) appeared as a continuous accumulation of merit by its successive emperors, Hsün Yüeh attempted to show that Han's cumulative merit surpassed that of any of its subjects–including Ts'ao Ts'ao. See Chen Chi-yun, *Hsün Yüeh (A.D. 148–209): The life and reflections of an early medieval Confucian* (Cambridge, 1975); and Chapter 15 below, pp. 804f.

99 *SKC* 1 (Wei 1), pp. 37–49. For the exclusion of those who were not members of the Liu family from holding the title of king, see Chapter 2 above, pp. 125–26.

the imperial family by going into mourning, far away in the southwest. In 219 the issue was freely discussed with Ts'ao Ts'ao.

In this discussion, two arguments emerged, one cosmological and one practical. The cosmological argument stated bluntly that all signs proved that Heaven had taken away the mandate from Han and given it to Ts'ao Ts'ao. The practical side retorted that Han's mandate looked very feeble indeed, but before the whole of China was conquered there could be no question of a clear and manifest new mandate. Ts'ao Ts'ao, essentially a practical man, concurred with the latter view.[100]

Before we pursue this subject further, we will describe the main events in the rest of the empire. Ts'ao Ts'ao had extended his territory in a westerly direction. In 211 the area around the old capital Ch'ang-an was conquered; in 214 a self-styled king who had held out in the far west since the last year of Ling-ti's reign was finally captured; in 215 the religious leader Chang Lu surrendered, and this development opened up for Ts'ao Ts'ao a road into the southwestern quarter of the empire. In that quarter, meanwhile, things had changed. By ruse and force Liu Pei had wrested control from Liu Chang, the erstwhile regional commissioner of I-chou. With Liu Pei in the southwest, Sun Ch'üan in the southeast, and Ts'ao Ts'ao in the north, a threefold division of the empire evolved. This was to last for more that fifty years.[101]

In his last years, Ts'ao Ts'ao suffered some reverses. In 218 a Han loyalist plot was hatched against him, but it failed. In 219 Liu Pei took the area formerly held by the religious leader from Ts'ao Ts'ao and broke Ts'ao Ts'ao's claim to sole legality by styling himself king.[102] That same year, Sun Ch'üan extended his power further north, thus upsetting the balance even more. Ts'ao Ts'ao's death came at an unfavorable moment.

The abdication of Han Hsien-ti (November-December A.D. *220)*

Amid real or imagined family quarrels, Ts'ao P'i (186–226), Ts'ao Ts'ao's heir apparent, took over his father's titles and offices. He became the new King of Wei, the new chancellor, and the new regional commissioner of the domain. With undue haste, as some saw it, since a filial son was supposed to remain in mourning longer than Ts'ao P'i did, the new king made a festive tour of the southern part of his domain. It is very likely that Ts'ao P'i felt that he needed to show his new force to both internal and external rivals, and more specifically to his younger brothers, and to Sun Ch'üan in the south.

100 *SKC* 32 (Shu 2), pp. 884f. For the discussion of 219, see *SKC* 1 (Wei 1), pp. 52–53 note 2.
101 *SKC* 1 (Wei 1), pp. 36–45; *SKC* 8 (Wei 8), pp. 263–65; *HHS* 9, pp. 386–90.
102 *SKC* 1 (Wei 1), p. 50; *SKC* 32 (Shu 2), p. 884.

Sun Ch'üan reacted by offering his allegiance; an important general of Liu Pei did the same, and so did the king of a non-Chinese tribe on the border between Liu Pei and Ts'ao P'i's territories.[103]

Such good signs prompted one courtier to reveal information which he had not disclosed for seven years. Since 213 he had known, from ancient prognostications, that Ts'ao P'i was the one who would mount the imperial throne. If this was meant as a feeler, it worked. During the last weeks of November up to 10 December, there was a lively discussion about the change of mandate, in which the Han emperor, Ts'ao P'i, Ts'ao P'i's entourage, and the Han court finally reached agreement. On 11 December 220 the spell was broken; the Han emperor abdicated in favor of Ts'ao P'i, and the Han dynasty was no more.[104]

Immediate consequences

There was, however, no certainty that the Han dynasty had come to an end. When news of the abdication reached Liu Pei in his southwestern capital, he gave out that the Han emperor had been killed. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, Ts'ao P'i had given the ex-emperor a beautiful title, a splendid income, and several privileges. Liu Pei, however, went into mourning, and members of his staff began to send in memorials full of proofs that Liu Pei was the Heaven-willed successor of the Han. One of the best minds of China, Chu-ko Liang (181–234), a man whose name is still known among the Chinese for his brilliant strategies, and who was at that moment the principal supporter of Liu Pei, joined the others. It was perhaps his support more than that of the others that persuaded Liu Pei to take the next step. On 15 May 221, he became emperor, stating emphatically that the rule of Han was to be eternal. He said that he was a member of the Han imperial family, which may very well have been true, and called his dynasty Han. So, in the southwestern quarter of the empire, the rule of Han continued.[105]

The third warlord was somewhat taken by surprise. For the time being, he recognized the new Wei dynasty in the north, and received the title "king." In A.D. 222, however, he proclaimed his own calendar, which implied that he did not fully recognize the regime of Wei. The proclama-

103 *SKC* 2 (Wei 2), p. 60.

104 *SKC* 2 (Wei 2), pp. 62f. The notes to the text of *San-kuo chih* quote extensively from writings that have not survived in other forms (for an account of those documents, see de Crespigny, *Records of the Three Kingdoms*). See also the citations in the notes to *Hou-Han shu* in *HHSCC* 9, f. 11b-12a; and Carl Leban, "Managing heaven's mandate: Coded communication in the accession of Ts'ao P'ei, A.D. 220," in *Ancient China: Studies in early civilization*, ed. David T. Roy and Tsuen-hsuin Tsien (Hong Kong, 1978).

105 *SKC* 2 (Wei 2), p. 76; *SKC* 32 (Shu 2), pp. 887f.

tion of a calendar was an imperial prerogative; Liu Pei had proclaimed his own when he took the imperial title in 221. From 222 onward, there were three calendars, one for Wei, one for Liu Pei's regime of Han, and one for Sun Ch'üan. Undoubtedly because Sun Ch'üan could not claim that the Han emperor had abdicated in his favor, or that he was himself a member of the Han imperial family, he had to remain content with his royal title. Only in 229 were signs and miracles reported which augured an imperial title for Sun Ch'üan. From 23 May 229 onward Sun Ch'üan is known as the first emperor of the Wu dynasty, and there were now three emperors.[106] Liu Pei had died in 223 and Ts'ao P'i in 226, but their successors were to continue their wars against each other for more than half a century.

THE FALL OF HAN IN PERSPECTIVE

The Han dynasty fell because the concept of dynastic change had made its way from the people to influential circles in Ts'ao Ts'ao's entourage. Weak emperors, or eunuchs, empresses, and the Yellow Turbans are blamed for the decline of Han, but until a thousand years after its fall efforts were still being made to restore the dynasty. For some, the creation of the Wei dynasty remained an unlawful act which tainted those emperors and their successors with illegitimacy. Such a view left open the question of where the legitimate succession had been moved.

The dynasty and metaphysics

Just as in the case of the Roman empire, so with the Han dynasty it has been asked why the empire fell. The answers have been as varied as those about Rome, some blaming individual emperors, some calling attention to institutional and cultural factors quite beyond the control of individuals. There is of course a difference between politicians who saw it happen in their lifetime and historians who pondered the question at a distance.

The commonest explanation of the fall of Han is given by the opening line of a fourteenth-century novel that concerns the end of the dynasty: "In general, the world must unite when it has long been divided and it must be divided when it has long been united."[107] This explanation regards all the actors and all their actions as essentially subordinate to some greater, empirically proved process, whereby anything that is created must one day

106 *SKC* 47 (Wu 2), pp. 1134.

107 This is the opening line of the novel *San-kuo (chih) yen-i* by Lo Kuan-chung (ca. 1330–ca. 1400). It has been translated into English by C. H. Brewitt-Taylor, *San Kuo or Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Singapore, 1925; popular edition, 1929); for an abridged translation see Moss Roberts, *Three kingdoms: China's epic drama* (New York, 1976).

fall apart. This view is akin to that of those Western historians who regard the fall of Rome as the outcome of an inevitable process, as if an empire were an organic structure subject to organic decay.

Others, looking more closely into the matter, have tried to discover the material reasons for the unmistakable decline of the dynasty. As we have seen, there was a school of thought which held that this decline was only a temporary affair, and that the Han would resurface. This school was vindicated by Liu Pei's accession, but its voice was silenced in the north, and eventually in the southeast too, when Sun Ch'üan declared on his accession that the Han dynasty was "exhausted." Another school of thought conceded that the dynasty was at its end, but only the conqueror of the whole of China could claim to be its successor. This school counted Ts'ao Ts'ao among its adherents, but its voice too was drowned out after his death. Both ways of thinking, however, did not totally disappear, but continued to exercise an influence in the centuries to come.

The third school of thought, which held that an immediate change of dynasty was inevitable, turned out to be the most successful, and we must look for the roots of this theory in order to understand the abdication. There can be little doubt that it originated among the people and found its first expression in the rival emperors that were set up by rebels "who worked with signs and miracles." If there had been only one such emperor, we might brush the phenomenon away as an isolated fact. We can, however, document at least fourteen such rival Sons of Heaven within the period A.D. 132–193, spread over all areas of the empire, and we must recognize the existence of a process. On the one hand, emperorship came under the influence of religion; on the other hand, popular religious ideals increasingly found political expression.

At the beginning of the dynasty, by 202 B.C., the first Han emperor had been successful thanks to his military victories, and religion played only a small role. This had been a time when the "deer was loose," when the imperial title was the prize for whoever caught it. Gradually, however, the emperors had acquired a new prerogative. From 113 B.C. onward a reign title was published at fixed intervals in order to designate the years. The year 104 B.C. was thus called the first year of the Grand Beginning, the next year was the second year of the Grand Beginning, and so on. After four years of Grand Beginning, a new reign title was published. The year 100 B.C. was called the first year of Heavenly Han.[108]

On first glance, it looks as though the Former Han emperors were free to publish a new reign title whenever they chose, but closer inspection sug-

108 For the introduction of reign titles from 113 B.C., see Chapter 2 above, pp. 155f. For the reign title T'ai-ch'u, see Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 17f.

gests that this was not so. Wu-ti changed his era names every fourth year, as did Hsüan-ti, Ch'eng-ti, and Ai-ti; Yüan-ti did so every fifth year, and Chao-ti every sixth. This cannot be due to coincidence; it strongly suggests that the emperors were bound by unknown reasons to fixed periods of time before they could change the reign title. Even Wang Mang, who temporarily set aside the Han dynasty, never published reign titles that lasted longer than six years. Only the Later Han emperors were free from such constraints and changed reign titles seemingly at will. This resulted in reign-titles that remained in force for decades (the longest era lasted thirty-two years), but also in some that did not last longer than one year (the years 120, 121, and 150 each represented one complete era). The Later Han emperors were in this respect more free than their predecessors of the Former Han.

It was during the last decade of the Former Han that the dynasty had begun to be connected with prognostication and omens. Prognostications surfaced wherein the length of the dynasty was foretold, and omens no longer simply expressed Heaven's anger, but seemed to point to a complete dynastic change.[109] After the Wang Mang interval, the restoration of the dynasty in A.D. 25 was itself an event heavily supported by such prognostications, and it drove contending theories underground.

Prognostications were considered as being written by Confucius or ancient sages. The Five Classics, it was argued, expressed the sum total of the truth, but the Sage had known all along that their language was difficult. Therefore he wrote secret appendices to the classics in order to make his intentions fully known. Toward the end of the Former Han, these appendices were being "discovered" and used for or against the dynasty. It has been said that by linking the authorship of prognostication texts with Confucius, the prestige of the Confucian classics was attached to the dubious practice of fortunetelling.[110] If that is so, the Later Han's reliance on prognostications must in its turn be seen as an effort to attach the prestige of the Confucian classics to the restoration.

So, although it was established by military conquest, Later Han emperorship acquired a metaphysical footing. During the early reigns the distinction between the emperor's temporal and his metaphysical power did not come out into the open; under the later reigns it became accepted that the emperor need not necessarily rule as well as reign. The many child emperors illustrate this point; while they could not possibly be expected to rule, their mere presence sufficed to fulfill the metaphysical requirements of the governing elite.

109 See Chapter 2 above, p. 221. 110 See Leban, "Managing heaven's mandate."

But to return to the Chinese people: in itself it is not surprising that it took a long time before the institution of emperorship began to have a place in popular thinking. Emperorship had been imposed on the people in 221 B.C., and whatever theories the elite might build around it, time was needed before these theories could be absorbed by the population at large.

Most important in the metaphysical underpinning of emperorship was the so-called Five Phases (*wu-hsing*) theory:[111] everything, from the grand movements of history to the minute workings of the human body, was the outward expression of one of five metaphysical powers: earth, water, fire, wood, or metal. These powers succeeded each other in fixed sequence, and it was important to know which was paramount at any given moment. If one did not take this into account, the chances were that one's actions might run counter to the power then in force, and thus end in failure. On a grand scale, history was understood as the sequence of these powers, each dynasty representing one of them, and each new dynasty signaling that the old power had disappeared, to be replaced by a new one. In A.D. 26, the first emperor of Later Han decided that fire was the power then in force, and that his dynasty was the worldly manifestation of it. The color red corresponded with fire, and so we often read about the Red Han or the Red Liu (Liu being the surname of the Han imperial family).

A weak point in this metaphysical legitimation of the dynasty lay in its inherent fluidity; it was generally understood that no power remained in force forever, and where there were signs that a new power was coming to the fore, it would have to imply consequences for the dynasty. If the Five Phases theory provided legitimacy, on the one hand, it also served as an instrument for dynastic change. The most common theory was that fire would in due time be replaced by earth with its corresponding color, yellow. Uncertainty, however, surrounded the question of when and how this replacement was to take place. Was earth to conquer fire, or was fire going to give birth to earth? In political terms, was the new dynasty to be established through conquest, or was it to be established by peaceful means?

We know very little about popular religion during the Han. We can surmise that it must have been fragmented, each region having its own customs and deities. To the official historian it was not an interesting phenomenon unless it interfered with the business of government. During the Later Han, however, religion sometimes took the form of mass movements, as for instance in 107, when the historian noted a mass migration of people in the northern regions, where they had been circulating alarming

111 For this subject, see note 54 above, and Chapter 3, p. 255.

stories. In 175 too, a mass movement was reported to the court, and the Yellow Turbans were the most dramatic instance of a mass movement bred by religion. In recent years, studies have revealed that during the middle period of the Later Han there existed a sect that foretold the coming of a messianic figure who would deliver the faithful from earthly troubles.[112] Religion and politics form a potent mixture, as the court will have noticed when it had to deal with rival emperors set up by the people in connection with some metaphysical or religious system.

Among the elite, meanwhile, the question of the dynasty's legitimacy took a different turn. Almost everyone conceded that the dynasty and the Liu family were the legitimate holders of the imperial title, and even when they felt dissatisfaction with the actual emperor, they did not try to change the dynasty. Instead, a number of plots were hatched to replace the living emperor with another member of the imperial family. In 107, perhaps in 127, in 147 and in 188, we have evidence of plots to remove the living emperor. If any of them had succeeded, the new emperor would still have been chosen from the Liu family. When the coalition against Tung Cho deliberated the setting up of a new emperor in 191, the man they considered was again a member of the Liu family. If there were many indications among the people that the Han dynasty had outlived its mandate, this thinking did not travel upward into the elite.

It was during the confused last thirty years of the dynasty that such ideas finally began to influence this group. The old elite had disappeared, and new men took their place as warlords and strategists, bringing with them fresh ideas. Prognostications that had long been forgotten came once more to the fore, and as at the end of the Former Han, omens were once more interpreted as signs of the impending end of the dynasty. The establishment of a new dynasty was not, in the eyes of the proponents of dynastic change, merely a military affair. In their eyes this was certainly not a time when "the deer was loose," but rather a time when Heaven had selected its man in advance. Those who see in the abdication of Hsien-ti merely a cold game of power politics misjudge the religious, joyous side of the event. In this thinking, the old dynasty voluntarily abdicated, and voluntarily passed on its mandate to the new man. In this respect, elite thinking differed from popular thinking. The popular rebellions with antidynastic overtones prove that, among the people, the theory of dynastic conquest was accepted. The actual abdication proves that the theory of peaceful and voluntary dynastic change came to prevail among the elite.

112 See Anna K. Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu dans le taoïsme des Han* (Paris, 1969), esp. pp. 58–84. For an early example of these movements (3 B.C.), see Michael Loewe, *Ways to paradise: The Chinese quest for immortality* (London, 1979), pp. 98f.

If we accept that the theory of dynastic change first became visible among the elite during the last years of the Former Han; that it was then driven underground by the restoration, to be combined with popular religion during the last century of Later Han rule; and that finally it was taken over, in modified form, by the new elite gathered by the various warlords, the question of why the Han fell has been answered in part. The Han fell because there had grown up a metaphysical system that called for its fall, and which waited only for the right man to implement the theory. Many believed that Ts'ao Ts'ao was this right man; he, however, warded off such suggestions. He tried to build a new structure, one in which the emperor reigned and the generals ruled. His son Ts'ao P'i did not share his father's ideas, and had a few reasons of his own to aspire to the title of emperor.

His succession as Ts'ao Ts'ao's heir was not uncontested; if he became emperor, any effort to remove him would become an effort to remove an emperor and this, as history proved, was unlikely to meet with support or success. Moreover, Ts'ao P'i was the son of a powerful and imposing father, and even though he had inherited Ts'ao Ts'ao's titles, it is not certain that he also inherited Ts'ao Ts'ao's prestige. His somewhat hasty tour of his southern possessions so soon after his father's death may have been, among other things, an effort to boost his popularity with his troops. Another reason for Ts'ao P'i's accession as first emperor of the Wei dynasty may have been that he was five years younger than the Han emperor and thus in a slightly uncomfortable position to give him orders.

When all is said and done we still do not know whether Ts'ao P'i yielded to pressure from his own officials or planned and started the whole process of abdication himself. The truth is probably somewhere in the middle. But if Ts'ao P'i thought that by declaring himself emperor he would win the same loyalty as the Han emperor, history proved him wrong.

Traditional theories about the decadence of the dynasty

Most historians describe the history of the Later Han as one of decline from a vigorous beginning to a ruinous end. So it is natural that they should have asked how this decline came about. Traditionally, three answers have been given. Some historians blame individual emperors; others blame rule by women and eunuchs; and yet others blame the Yellow Turbans.

This is the way in which the history of the Later Han and of Liu Pei's Han dynasty was described in A.D. 304:[113]

113 *Chin shu* 101, p. 2649. Some of the technical terms have been rendered here by more easily understandable equivalents. The term "holy vessels" (*shen-ch'i*) was regularly used to denote the imperial seal; i.e., a symbol such as the throne; Shu was situated in the southwest of China.

My Epochal Founder, Kuang-wu-ti, extensively applying his sage-like military excellence, restored life to the foundations of the dynasty, sacrificing to Han on a par with Heaven, not neglecting its ancient practices, causing the sun, the moon and the stars, which had been dimmed, to give fresh light, and the holy vessels, which had been hidden, to shine forth with fresh lustre. The combined eras of Ming-ti and Chang-ti doubled this splendour, its blazing brightness spreading twice as far. From Ho-ti and An-ti onward, imperial control gradually slackened; to follow in Heaven's footsteps became difficult indeed, and the line of imperial succession was repeatedly interrupted. The Yellow Turbans turned all nine provinces into a billowing sea, the host of those marred by castration poisoned all within the four seas, Tung Cho followed this by giving free rein to his raving madness, Ts'ao Ts'ao and his son perpetrated their evil-doings one after the other. Thus the last Han emperor was cast aside from his ten thousand kingdoms, Liu Pei was abandoned in far-away Shu, hoping there might perhaps in the end be an upsurge carrying him back to the ancient capitals.

Unexpectedly, Heaven did not show regret for the disasters it caused, and Liu Pei's son ended in utter anxiety and humiliation. Since his altars to the soil and to the grain perished, until today forty years have passed, during which the ancestral temples have not enjoyed sacrificial blood. Now Heaven is guiding all men's minds, showing regret for the disasters it caused to imperial Han. . . .

This remarkable piece of pro-Han propaganda, which was written on the occasion of yet another restoration of the Han in A.D. 304 (see p. 370 below), contains most of the elements that are stressed again and again by Chinese historians who study the causes of the fall of Han. We see mentioned the role of individual emperors, the harmful effects of child emperors ("the line of imperial succession was repeatedly interrupted"), the Yellow Turbans and the eunuchs ("the host of those marred by castration"). It shows a definite bias against the Wei dynasty ("Ts'ao Ts'ao and his son"), thereby foreshadowing the "legitimate succession" debates of later ages (see below, pp. 373f.). Finally the text is an expression of the recurrent idea that Han could not really ever die. Earlier on in the passage, the length of the Han dynasty is calculated at "double the years of the Hsia and Shang, with more sovereigns than the Chou," meaning at least a thousand years and some forty emperors.[114]

Many Chinese historians discuss the merits and demerits of individual emperors because they feel that it is the individual emperors who caused the dynasty to flourish or decline. Discounting child emperors (of which the Later Han had five), the dynasty consisted of nine emperors: Kuang-wu-ti, Ming-ti, Chang-ti, Ho-ti, An-ti, Shun-ti, Huan-ti, Ling-ti, and the last emperor, Hsien-ti. In traditional thinking, some of these nine are good and others are bad. The first emperor, Kuang-wu-ti, is always considered good, and to him attach the excellence and virtue that are inevitably

114 *CS* 101, p. 2649.

ascribed to founders of dynasties. The last emperor too enjoys a good reputation, which is surprising in view of the fact that traditional historians often find in last emperors signs of vice and unfitness to govern. The historian Fan Yeh (398–446) sums up the general opinion when he writes: "Heaven had long since been tired of the virtue of Han; what blame attaches to the last emperor for this?"[115]

The second emperor, Ming-ti, is also considered good, an exception being made, however, for the harshness of his punishments. Chang-ti, his successor, is also good, although the historian Wang Fu-chih (1619–1692) saw in him the first signs of dynastic decline.[116] The burden of the blame is borne by the five emperors who succeeded him. As early as A.D. 190, the scholar Ts'ai Yung called Ho-ti, An-ti, and Huan-ti "worthless." In 219, during discussions with Ts'ao Ts'ao about the history of the dynasty, it was An-ti who was seen as the first bad emperor. Since then tradition has wavered between naming Ho-ti or An-ti as the first bad emperor. Their successors, Shun-ti, Huan-ti, and Ling-ti, meet with universal condemnation, although Huan-ti and Ling-ti are considered worse than Shun-ti. In due time, the expression "Huan and Ling" came to mean "oppressive government," and they passed into the language of politics and poetry as the latter-day equivalents of "Yu and Li," the traditionally bad kings of Chou.[117]

As we have seen, the growth of historical stereotypes around the Later Han emperors began in the last decades of the dynasty itself, and it is not surprising that such stereotypes should have made a deep impression on traditional theories of the decline of the dynasty. The historian Ssu-ma Kuang (1019–1086) distinguished four major phases in the history of Later Han. Initially there was the splendid period of Kuang-wu-ti, Ming-ti, and Chang-ti, when everybody "down to the palace guards" was steeped in the classical virtues and ancient ways were followed. Ho-ti, An-ti, and Shun-ti lacked this excellence. Fortunately, the inherited influence of the first three emperors continued to work on the high-ranking officials, and many excellent statesmen emerged. Often at the cost of their lives, they prevented the collapse of the state. If Shun-ti had had a worthy successor, the dynasty might have witnessed a revival, but unfortunately Shun-ti was followed by the "stupid tyranny of Huan and Ling."

115 *HHS* 9, p. 391.

116 For appreciations of these two emperors, see *HHS* 2, pp. 124–25; and *HHS* 3, p. 159. For the views of Wang Fu-chih, see *Tu T'ung-chien lun* 7, pp. 198–99.

117 For the discussions of A.D. 219, see *SKC* 1 (Wei 1), pp. 52–53. For opinions expressed on the qualities of emperors, see *HHS* 9, p. 370; *HHS* (tr.) 9, p. 3197; and the comments and appreciations at the end of *HHS* chapters 4–8, and in *HHSCC* 6, f. 13b–14a. See also Wang Fu-chih, *Tu T'ung-chien lun* 7, pp. 201–11, 224. The use of the expression "Huan-Ling" may possibly be traced to a memorial submitted by Chu-ko Liang in 223 (*SKC* 35 [Shu 5], p. 920).

Not only did these emperors persist in their predecessors' follies, but they added to these a ceaseless persecution of the worthy, so that virtue disappeared from the court and hatred was bred. Thus, in the last phase, Hsien-ti became a "homeless wanderer," though in his person the last vestiges of former greatness lingered on. His mere presence sufficed to prevent Ts'ao Ts'ao, a "cruel and strong man," from taking the throne for himself.[118]

The historian Chao I (1727–1814) has a different theory. Kuang-wu-ti, he argues, did not stem from the main branch of the Former Han imperial family, but from a collateral branch. His founding of the Later Han was, therefore, "a new twig on an old trunk; it may look flourishing, but its vital energy is limited." Small wonder, then, that Ho-ti, An-ti, Shun-ti, Huan-ti, and Ling-ti, not to mention the child emperors, died young, not one of them living beyond thirty-four years of age. Only Kuang-wu-ti, Ming-ti, and, strangely enough, Hsien-ti, lived beyond that age. In his view, the prosperity of the whole empire is connected with the longevity of the individual emperors, and the decline of the dynasty shows in their early deaths.[119]

The importance that Chao I attaches to these frequent early deaths is perhaps not so far-fetched as it seems. When the traditional historian is asked why Ho-ti and An-ti right through to Ling-ti were bad, the invariable answer is "Because they allowed women and eunuchs to rule." It is here that the frequent early deaths come into the picture. Child emperors and emperors dying young will have no direct descendants, so that the throne will often be left vacant. Constitutionally, the lack of an heir leads to a regency by the empress dowager and her family, who then proceed to select a new emperor from a collateral branch of the imperial house, thus making "a twig grow upon a twig."

Naturally, they will select a young child, so that they can prolong their power. Equally naturally, if the emperor grows up he will resent the regent's influence and will start to look for allies. The members of the bureaucracy are of no use to him. They are either bought or cowed into submission by the regent's family, and in any case an extension of imperial power is not in their interest. Consequently, the emperor turns to the eunuchs, often his sole confidants. When the regent is removed, the eunuchs, as sole interpreters and executors of the imperial will, fill the power vacuum. In this way eunuch rule is explained as the inevitable outcome of rule by women, which is in its turn explained as the inevitable consequence of a weakness in the male line.

118 *TCTC* 68, pp. 2173–74; de Crespigny, *Last of the Han*, pp. 356–58.
119 Chao I, *Nien-erh shih cha-chi* 4, f. 15a–15b.

Basically, it matters little whether one connects rule by women and eunuchs with the early deaths of emperors (as Chao I does) or with a decline in virtue (as Ssu-ma Kuang did). The fact remains that rule by women and eunuchs is indeed a marked characteristic of Later Han history from Ho-ti until the massacre of the eunuchs in September 189. Why should rule by women and eunuchs be considered a sign of dynastic decline? The odd fact is that the traditional historians hardly ever bother to explain this; the argument is taken for granted. Occasionally, we read that power must emanate from *yang*, the active, vigorous, male principle of nature.[120] Women naturally represent *yin*, the opposite, passive principle. Eunuchs too were considered *yin*, since their maleness, their *yang*, had been cut off. In this way, rule by women and eunuchs is interpreted as power emanating from *yin*, a concept abhorrent to the traditional thinker.

Heaven, earth, and nature seemed to share this abhorrence and showed it in the occurrence of comets, earthquakes, and freaks. The idea that nature itself abhors rule by women and eunuchs is also very old. When the historian Ssu-ma Piao (ca. A.D. 300) compiled a list of such unnatural phenomena, he explained most of them as being caused by women's and eunuchs' rule.[121] Within a month after Ts'ao Ts'ao's death, his son and heir, Ts'ao P'i, then only king of Wei and not yet emperor, enacted a rule forever barring eunuchs from holding any but menial positions, and in 222, just before Ts'ao P'i, now emperor, appointed his first empress, he decreed that empresses, empresses dowager, and their families should forever be banned from participation in government affairs.[122]

To this picture of bad emperors, regents, and eunuchs a fourth element can be added: the Yellow Turbans. A few traditional historians see the Yellow Turbans as the most important immediate cause of the fall of the dynasty. Ou-yang Hsiu (1007–1072) writes: "When the Yellow Turban rebels rose, the house of Han was in great disarray" and "beyond help."[123] Ho Cho (1661–1722) connected the Yellow Turbans with eunuch rule: "During the Later Han, the swarms of the Yellow Turbans and the wars between the warlords proceeded from the persisting influence of eunuch poison."[124]

These historical stereotypes have also made their influence felt on Western historians. Like their Chinese counterparts, they too stress bad or irresponsible emperors, factional strife involving empresses dowager and

120 E.g., see *Ch'un-ch'iu fan-lu* 12, f. 9a, "The lord is *yang*, the subject is *yin*"; and *Po-hu t'ung-i* 4A, f. 1b (Tjan, *Po Hu T'ung*, Vol. II, p. 592), "Yang leads and *yin* conforms."

121 This list now forms the "Treatise on the workings of the Five Phases" (Wu-hsing chih) i.e., *HHS* (tr.) 13–18. 122 *SKC* 2 (Wei 2), pp. 58, 80.

123 Ou-yang Hsiu, *Ou-yang Wen-chung ch'üan-chi* 17, f. 5a.

124 This remark is included in a comment to the title of *HHS* 78; see *HHSCC* 78, f. 1a.

eunuchs, and the Yellow Turbans as the symptoms or causes of the dynasty's decline. But Western historians do not understand the badness or unfitness of emperors in terms of a decline of virtue. They see it as the inevitable result of the fact that the emperors of a dynasty (except for its founder) grow up in a palace, out of contact with the people and constantly surrounded by luxury and intrigue.[125] In the case of the Later Han, this explanation is somewhat feeble: An-ti, Huan-ti, Ling-ti, and Hsien-ti spent their early years away from the palace, but this seems to have had no influence on their fitness to govern.

Empresses dowager, their families, and eunuchs figure in Western and Chinese literature alike as symptoms of dynastic decay. In recent years, a reevaluation has been attempted of the eunuchs' role in the decline of the Later Han.[126] Far from their being a sign of weakness, the eunuchs actually filled an important constitutional purpose. Han government, it is argued, depended on a system of checks and balances to prevent any group from seizing total power. When the regents' families upset the balance, the throne was constitutionally obliged to restore it, and here the eunuchs moved in.

If the regents' families had won, the very system of Han government would have been demolished and the dynasty would have perished earlier than it did. In this view, the eunuchs actually served to prolong the dynasty's life. This explanation has one weakness; during the Later Han a number of regents had it in their power to set up a new dynasty, yet they never did so. This was not because they had no means of doing so, but because, among the elite of that time, there was no political or metaphysical theory that could legitimize a change of dynasty.

The Yellow Turbans are frequently mentioned in Western literature as an important factor in the fall of Han. This is partly due to mainland Chinese historians, who have written extensively on peasant rebellions. In Chinese Communist historiography, peasant rebellions are considered a progressive element, and around 1960 a host of studies appeared on this subject. Part of this interest spread to in Western sinology, and numerous studies on the Yellow Turbans were the result.[127] There is a certain justice

125 See, for example, Otto Franke, *Geschichte des chinesischen Reiches* (Berlin, 1930–52), Vol. III, pp. 415f.; and Edwin O. Reischauer and John K. Fairbank, *East Asia: The great tradition* (London, 1958), pp. 125f. 126 Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, p. 155; and Chapter 3 above, pp. 287f.

127 See, e.g., Hou Wai-lu, "Chung-kuo feng-chien she-hui ch'ien-hou ch'i ti nung-min chan-cheng chi ch'i kang-ling k'ou-hao ti fa-chan," *LSYC*, 1959.4, 45–59; and Ch'i Hsia, *Ch'in Han nung-min chan-cheng shih* (Peking, 1962). For Western writers on this subject, see Werner Eichhorn, "T'ai-p'ing und T'ai-p'ing religion," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung*, 5 (1957), 113–40; Rolf Stein, "Remarques sur les mouvements du taoïsme politico-religieux au IIe siècle ap. J. C.," *TP*, 50 (1963), 1–78; James P. Harrison, *The Communists and Chinese peasant rebellions (A study in the rewriting of Chinese history)* (London, 1970).

in the idea that a peasant rebellion, provoked by misgovernment, can topple a dynasty, but in the case of the Later Han the question of cause and effect is not as clear as many Chinese Communist and Western historians make it appear.

The Yellow Turban rebellion broke out in A.D. 184. It flared up periodically in the years afterward, and the structure of government changed on account of the chronic rebellions. In 192 Ts'ao Ts'ao succeeded in winning over a reported 300,000 Yellow Turbans. He incorporated them into his own army, but after 192 there are still many indications of continued Yellow Turban activity. They aided now this warlord, now that one, or they operated independently. After 207, however, their name disappears from the records; thus they cannot have played a direct role in the abdication of 220.

But their indirect role was perhaps more important than their direct involvement. Among religious rebellions, the Yellow Turbans were more outspoken than any other in stating that the days of Han were over. "The green Heaven is already dead, the yellow Heaven will take its place," was their slogan in 184. "Green Heaven" is usually interpreted as meaning Han, although in the orthodox theory the color of Han was red.[128] In 192 they sent a letter to Ts'ao Ts'ao in which they rejected any idea of a rapprochement between him and themselves. They wrote: "The element of Han is already exhausted, a yellow house will be established, and the great movements of Heaven are not, sir, something that you can encompass."[129] It is impossible to ascertain whether the incorporation of huge numbers of Yellow Turbans into Ts'ao Ts'ao's army in 192 actually strengthened those elite circles that advocated immediate dynastic change; the most that we can say is that it cannot have weakened such thinking.

The influence of the Yellow Turbans on the events of 189 in the wake of Ling-ti's death is equally difficult to gauge. Tung Cho had earned his first successes in 184 in the course of the war against the Yellow Turbans. So had Ts'ao Ts'ao, Liu Pei, and a host of other warlords. In this respect their role is important, though indirect, and it must be stressed that Yellow Turbans were in no way directly involved in the events of 189.

In spite of the rebels' opposition to the court and the dynasty, it is clear that the person of the actual living emperor, even though he may be a "homeless wanderer" like Hsien-ti, filled them with awe and uneasiness. Several times Hsien-ti was in the hands of rebels, both during the eclipse of the court in the years 192–195 and during his journey back to Lo-yang in 195–196. Although in theory nothing could have been easier than killing

128 *HHS* 71, p. 2299.
129 *SKC* 1 (Wei 1), p. 10, note 2.

this teenage boy, in fact he was spared even though his whole court was massacred. The rebels who accompanied Hsien-ti on his flight toward Lo-yang were glad to let him go as soon as the opportunity arose, because his presence caused them uneasiness. They were incapable of setting up a new emperor and a new dynasty, doubtless because they did not have a well thought-out theory to support such a change. It was left to elite circles to develop such a theory, and the confusion of the last decades of Han gave them and their man the opportunity to come to the fore. When Ts'ao P'i subscribed to this theory and accepted Hsien-ti's abdication in A.D. 220, the Yellow Turbans are not likely to have been uppermost in his mind.

The continuing ideal of Han

The unity of China under one leader is the most persistent ideal of Chinese history. It is as manifest in the twentieth century as it was in the fifth century B.C. Whenever China has been divided under different regimes, this has been felt to be a temporary situation. During the Warring States period that preceded the Han, and during the Middle Ages that followed it, peace never lasted longer than a few years, and the ultimate goal of all wars was always the same: the reunification of China under one leader.

During the Warring States period, the various kings themselves were perhaps not totally aware of the form this unity and this leadership was to take, but during the Middle Ages (the four centuries after the fall of Han, 220–589), the unity and order of Han were remembered as a reality and the name of Han came to stand for a perfection that had been lost and a unity that was desired. Several rulers named their dynasties Han or designed genealogies connecting them with Han emperors. Several families proudly traced their ancestry to some Han official, and in faraway Japan several clans claimed descent from Han kings (sometimes nonexistent).

In Liu Pei's dynasty, a theory was developed which held that several Han dynasties were to succeed each other, just as brothers are born one after the other. The Former Han was seen as the elder brother, the Later Han as the middle brother, and a new Han dynasty was to follow as the youngest brother. For this reason, the Han dynasty established by Liu Pei in A.D. 221 is sometimes called "youngest brother Han."[130] This dynasty was suppressed in 263, but forty years later a new Han dynasty was proclaimed in north China in A.D. 304. Part of the proclamation which heralded this dynasty has been noted above (p. 363).

130 The use of the expression "youngest brother Han" as a synonym for Liu Pei's Han dynasty is attested in *SKC* 35 (Shu 5), p. 927; and *SKC* 45 (Shu 15), p. 1079. The expression "middle Han" for Later Han is attested in *SKC* 21 (Wei 21), p. 601 note 1; *SKCCC* 21 (Wei 21), f. 11b.; and *SKC* 45 (Shu 15), p. 1080.

Its ruler, Liu Yüan (d. 310), was a Hsiung-nu king in his own right, but in 304 he adopted the additional title of emperor of Han. This was not an empty gesture. Liu Yüan was well aware of the facts of China's remote history, and he knew that some of China's greatest Sons of Heaven had been born, like himself, in barbarian countries. He had studied the *Han shu*, where he learned that, five hundred years earlier, the very first Han emperor had given a princess in marriage to one of his own ancestors. The line that had sprung from this marriage bore the imperial surname Liu, in deference to the princess, and this was a sign of the brother-to-brother relationship between the Han imperial family and the princess's descendants, Liu Yüan himself.

Liu Yüan had a detailed knowledge of the vicissitudes of Later Han history and the events accompanying its fall. The history of Liu Pei's Han dynasty, which was in his eyes the true successor to Han, was known to him, as may be seen in his remark:[131]

> Han has possessed the world for a large number of generations, its grace and virtue have so been locked within the people's hearts that Liu Pei, cramped down in an area not larger than one province, could yet hold his own against the rest of the world.

The ignominious end of this Han dynasty, whose emperor, Liu Pei's son, surrendered meekly to the Wei in the north in A.D. 263, may or may not have been seen by Liu Yüan, who was at the time working as a minor official in the capital of Wei. Forty years later, in 304, he decided to press the "brother-to-brother" claim and to found his own Han dynasty. When he died in 310, he was awarded the posthumous name Kuang-wen; Chinese custom in these matters links the concept *wen* (excellence in peacetime) with its opposite, *wu* (excellence in wartime), so that, by being called Kuang-wen, he was placed on a par with Kuang-wu[-ti], the founder of the Later Han.

He built an ancestral temple in which he sacrificed to the most eminent Han emperors, and in this sense the Han dynasty continued until this temple was burned to the ground in 318, "amid the howls of ghosts."[132] But in the intervening years, the magic of the name Han had seemed to work. In 311, this Hsiung-nu Han dynasty conquered the capital city of Lo-yang and captured the Chinese emperor alive. When the curious Hsiung-nu emperor asked his Chinese confrère why he thought it had come to this, the hapless victim felt obliged to reply that it had all been Heaven's work: "Great Han is

131 *CS* 101, p. 2649. 132 *CS* 101, p. 2652; *CS* 102, p. 2679.

destined to receive a number of years in conformity with the principle of Heaven," presumably meaning eternity.[133]

The Chinese had meanwhile enthroned another emperor in the other capital, but to no avail. The armies of the alien Han dynasty overran Ch'ang-an in 316, and once again a Chinese emperor was carried off alive to his Hsiung-nu rival. A little while later, the Hsiung-nu emperor's son died, but after some days he revived and had a wonderful story to tell: while he had appeared to be dead, he had actually roamed in the heavens, where he had met the ghost of Liu Yüan, who told him that the heavens kept a place in reserve for his father. Another king of heaven had requested him to take a present back with him to the world of the living, to the emperor of Han. When the present was examined, it vindicated the son's story. The Han emperor was overjoyed and exclaimed that he was not afraid of death anymore.[134]

While Han's majesty was thus manifest even in the realm of the dead, on earth its prestige dimmed considerably after the destruction of the ancestral temple in A.D. 318; in 319 the reigning Hsiung-nu emperor abandoned the name of Han and adopted the name Chao instead. This was done because he, unlike Liu Yüan, thought that the Hsiung-nu emperors represented an independent dynasty. They were the successors not to Han, but to the Chin dynasty, two of whose emperors had fallen into his hands. Nevertheless, sacrifices to Liu Yüan were continued until 329, when this Chao dynasty, and all its princes and high officials, were buried alive in Lo-yang.[135]

Nine years later, in A.D. 338, a new Han dynasty was proclaimed in the same city that had served as Liu Pei's capital, in the southwestern corner of China. Detailed information is unfortunately lacking, and we do not know the reason for this decision. The new Han emperor bore the surname Li, so he could not conceivably claim to belong to the Han imperial family, whose surname was Liu. Whatever the reason, this dynasty lasted only nine years. Its last emperor surrendered to the Chin dynasty, which had been overrun by the Hsiung-nu emperors in the north, but which had been restored in the southeast.[136] This émigré Chin dynasty never recaptured the north and tottered on until 420, when a general, Liu Yü (356–422), forced the last Chin emperor to abdicate.

Liu Yü called the dynasty he founded Sung, but it is significant that he took pains to trace his ancestry back to the very first emperor of Han, who

133 *CS* 102, p. 2661. The phrase, "in conformity with the principle of Heaven," was used again six centuries later; when it was proclaimed as the dynastic name of yet another Han, by an emperor of Han who was probably Arab (see p. 372 below). 134 *CS* 102, pp. 2673–74.

135 *CS* 103, pp. 2684–85. 136 *CS* 7, p. 181; *TCTC* 96, p. 3017.

had now been dead for six hundred years. The historian Shen Yüeh (441–513), who was ordered by the throne in 487 to describe the rise to power of Liu Yü, gave as his explanation for Liu Yü's success that in all the intervening two hundred years since the fall of Han, the people had never really forgotten the Han, and that the Wei and Chin dynasties had actually each been a kind of caretaker dynasty, to bridge the gap between the Later Han and Liu Yü's Sung dynasty.[137]

After this the name of Han appears once more during the Middle Ages. A northern general, Hou Ching (503–552), had reason to fear for his life and in 548 offered his assistance to the then southern emperor, Wu-ti of the Liang dynasty (r. 502–549). The southern court mistakenly trusted him, but once the general was firmly entrenched in the southern capital of Chien-k'ang, he initiated a policy of terror, starving the old emperor, then eighty-five years old, to death, placing a puppet emperor on the throne of Liang, and finally setting himself up as emperor in 551. This short-lived dynasty (Hou Ching was killed in the next year and the Liang house was restored) was called Han, for reasons that we do not know. Apparently Hou Ching had taken with him from the north the idea that the name Han might serve as powerful propaganda, and he may have wanted the spiritual power of this name to guarantee the longevity of his dynasty.[138]

For the following 366 years, the name of Han disappears. During these centuries, China witnessed the unification of the empire by the Sui dynasty in 589, followed by the splendor of T'ang until 907. When the T'ang dynasty collapsed, the resulting chaos was in some ways reminiscent of the situation after the fall of Han. Among the fifteen or so dynasties that were proclaimed in the period 907–980, four were called Han. The longest lasted from 918 until 971 and was based in Canton. A curious detail is that its emperors, who bore the Han imperial surname of Liu, were probably of Arab descent. In the north, two Han dynasties were proclaimed, one lasting from 947 to 950, the next lasting from 951 until 979. In both cases the emperors were of non-Chinese descent, although they bore the family name of Liu. The shortest Han dynasty lasted for only one year (917) and was proclaimed in southwestern China, where Liu Pei had once ruled as Han emperor. Its ruler, however, did not claim descent from the Liu family.[139]

The last dynasty to bear the name Han was proclaimed four centuries later, in 1360. It is not clear what prompted its founder, who started life as

137 *Sung shu* 1, pp. 1f; *Sung shu* 3, pp. 60–1.

138 *Liang shu* 56, p. 859. See also William T. Graham, *"The lament for the south": Yü Hsin's "Ai Chiang-nan fu"* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 11.

139 *Chiu Wu-tai shih* 99, 100, 136; *Hsin Wu-tai shih* 10, 63, 65, 70.

a fisherman's son, to adopt the grandiose title of Han more than a millennium after Hsien-ti's abdication. His dynasty was extinguished four years later by the founder of the Ming dynasty, and details are scarce.[140] Since then the name Han lives on in expressions such as "Han characters," meaning Chinese characters, and the "Han race," meaning people of northern China. "Han scholar" is still the name the Chinese apply to someone whom we call a sinologist.

The legitimate succession

Each in its own way, the various Han dynasties proclaimed after A.D. 200 bear witness to the old idea that Han could not really die. But historians have to deal with facts, and the traditional Chinese historian faced a problem when he had to write abour the period after A.D. 220. In that period there were three calendars, and the historian had to choose which would be the main calendar and which would be the main dynasty in order to be able to date events. The historian's choice in this matter was not arbitrary; on the contrary, he chose the dynasty and the calendar which he considered to be legitimate, thereby declaring the other two dynasties illegitimate.

This problem is known as that of the legitimate succession. The question was whether the Han Mandate of Heaven had moved in 220 to Ts'ao P'i, who accepted Hsien-ti's abdication; or to Liu Pei, who belonged to the imperial family; or to Sun Ch'üan, who had no direct connection with the Han. The latter possibility has never been considered, and all historians concur in regarding the Wu dynasty as illegitimate. The choice has been between Liu Pei and Ts'ao P'i, who both had claims to being the true successors of Han.

During the period of division after 220, this problem was more than academic. When the Chinese dynasties were driven to the southeast after 316 by non-Chinese invaders from the north, it was important for them to know that they were the true holders and inheritors of the mandate. The true mandate, it was believed, would protect them like a spiritual barrier against their northern adversaries and eventually help them to regain the north.

The historical facts are as follows. In 263 Liu Pei's Han dynasty was conquered by its northern rival, the Wei dynasty of Ts'ao P'i; in 266 the Wei dynasty abdicated in favor of a new dynasty called Chin; in 280 this Chin dynasty conquered the southeastern state of Wu, thus reuniting the empire. In 316 the Chin dynasty was driven to the south, and from then on

140 *Ming shih* 123.

northern China was ruled by non-Chinese dynasties. In the south, the Chin gave way to the Sung in 420; the Sung to the Ch'i in 479; the Ch'i to the Liang in 502; and the Liang to the Ch'en in 557. The Ch'en dynasty ended in 589 when it was conquered by its northern rival, the Sui, and China was reunified once more.

The historian Hsi Tso-ch'ih (d. 384) showed considerable bias against Ts'ao Ts'ao. In his eyes the Wei were rebels against the Han, and the true mandate had gone to Liu Pei in the southwest. At the end of Liu Pei's dynasty the mandate returned to the north and came to be vested in the Chin dynasty, the dynasty under which Hsi Tso-ch'ih himself lived. For him the Chin dynasty was the direct successor to Han, without any intermediary.[141]

The historian and man of letters Ou-yang Hsiu (1007–1072) solved the problem in another way. In his view, all three post-Han dynasties were equally illegitimate because none of them succeeded in reunifying the empire. He argues that the true mandate was simply cut off in 220. It reappeared briefly under the Chin when this dynasty reunified China in 280, but afterward it was again cut off, reappearing only in 589 when the Sui reunified the empire.[142]

Ssu-ma Kuang (1019–1086) had to be more practical. When he compiled his vast comprehensive history of China, he had to make the choice between the calendars of the three successor states. He chose the calendar of the Wei dynasty and disregarded the other two calendars. In order to explain his choice, he developed a theory in which the unity of the empire was seen as the prerequisite of the true mandate. In his eyes, only Han, Chin, and Sui were legitimate dynasties, all others being mere feudal states. These feudal states were alike in that they did not possess the true mandate, but the feudal state that had accepted the abdication of a legitimate dynasty was somewhat more legitimate than the others. For that reason he chose the Wei dynasty as the main successor to Han, but he made clear that he did so more for reasons of expediency than of orthodoxy.[143]

This superficial treatment of the problem was attacked by Chu Hsi (1130–1200) when he rewrote Ssu-ma Kuang's history. Chu Hsi chose the dynasty of Liu Pei as the holder of the true mandate. For Chu Hsi, Liu

141 *CS* 82, p. 2154. For the whole question of legitimacy, see B. J. Mansvelt Beck, "The true emperor of China," in *Leyden studies in sinology*, ed. W. L. Idema (Leiden, 1981), pp. 23–33. For a recent study of this problem, see Jao Tsung-i, *Chung-kuo shih-hsüeh shang chih cheng-t'ung-lun* (Hong Kong, 1977). For the need felt by the Chin dynasty to retain its faith in its dynastic legitimacy, see Michael C. Rogers, *The chronicle of Fu Chien: A case of exemplar history* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968), pp. 51f.

142 *Cheng-t'ung lun* B, in *Ou-yang Wen-chung ch'üan-chi* 16, f. 3b-4a.

143 *TCTC* 69, pp. 2185–88 (Achilles Fang, *The chronicle of the Three Kingdoms* [Cambridge, Mass., 1952–65], pp. 45–48).

Pei's connection with the Han imperial family outweighed any claim Ts'ao P'i could lay to legitimacy, and in his history he used Liu Pei's calendar. For the period 264–280, after Liu Pei's dynasty was vanquished but before the southeastern Wu dynasty was conquered, Chu Hsi was at a loss what to do. Since for him all calendars current in that period were equally false, he solved the problem by writing them in small script only.

When the Wu dynasty was extinguished in 280, Chu Hsi felt that the true mandate had reappeared with the Chin dynasty, and he returned to large script to write the dates. From then on the true mandate went along with the Chin to the south in 317, only to disappear again in 420 when the Chin dynasty fell. In 589 it reappeared when the Sui dynasty once more reunified China. The northern non-Chinese dynasties are in his eyes as illegitimate as the southern successor states to Chin.[144]

We have seen that Chinese historians vary in their judgment on the events of A.D. 220, and most of them question the legality of the abdication. In this respect, Ts'ao P'i has not succeeded in convincing later generations, while Liu Pei still made his claim felt a millennium after his death.[145] Modern Chinese and Western historians have usually opted for Ssu-ma Kuang's practical solution, and with the application of the Western calendar to Chinese history the problem tends to disappear. The idea that a unified China is in some way more normal than a divided China has taken firm root in Western sinology. As a result, the period covered by the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220) is usually called Han.

Its three successor states are usually grouped together as the Three Kingdoms, and the Three Kingdoms together with the subsequent period of division (220–589) is sometimes termed the Middle Ages. None of the twenty-odd dynasties that rose and fell in that period succeeded in giving its name to the era. It is only after 589, when Sui unified the country, that the title of a dynasty reappears as the name of an era; the period 589–618 is called Sui, and the period 618–907 is called T'ang after the T'ang dynasty that succeeded the Sui. Apparently, only a dynasty that rules the

144 The small script used for the periods 264–280 and 420–589 can be seen in any edition of the *T'ung-chien kang-mu*. Chu Hsi discusses his reasons for doing so in the *Fan-li* section of the introductory chapter of his book, and in his preface.

145 The legitimacy of the Wei dynasty, or rather its lack of legitimacy, played a role in the so-called Great Rites controversy of the 1520s in Ming China. Opponents of the emperor in this controversy cited as an authoritative model a decree issued by the Wei emperor Ming in 229 in support of their argument, but their adversaries rejected this on the grounds of the Wei dynasty's dubious legitimacy. In the 1060s, in a similar controversy, Han Huan-ti and Ling-ti were cited as authoritative models, a claim indignantly rejected by Ssu-ma Kuang because he considered the two to be "mediocre rulers." In other words, the legitimacy of a previous dynasty and the stature of individual previous emperors influenced the way in which they could be used as authoritative models during later political struggles. See Carney Thomas Fisher, *The great ritual controversy in Ming China* (Diss. Univ. of Michigan., 1971), pp. 42–3, 72, 223, 241, and 281 note 59.

whole of China can succeed in giving its name to a whole period, and in this subtle way the Han mandate lives on in modern writings. For the true mandate of Han is not a question of metaphysics alone; at its core is the very real question of the unity of China itself.

CHAPTER 6

HAN FOREIGN RELATIONS

THE WORLD ORDER OF HAN CHINA: THEORY AND PRACTICE

In 219 B.C. the First Emperor of Ch'in decided to glorify the crowning success of his imperial career by erecting a number of inscribed stone monuments in various places on the east coast along the route of his first imperial tour of inspection. In one of the stone inscriptions (in Lang-yeh, modern Shantung) the emperor expressed his profound gratification that he had unified the entire civilized world known to the Chinese of the day. But the inscription was after all a public document, written with every intention to arouse the sense of solidarity of the newly unified empire. It therefore cannot be taken as representing the First Emperor's geographical conception of the world. Under the influence of the geographical speculation of Tsou Yen (305–240? B.C.), the First Emperor shared the belief with other rulers of the Warring States period that there were lands beyond the seas where "immortality drugs" could be obtained. In fact, it was also in 219 B.C. that the First Emperor sent Hsü Fu Shih (also called Hsü Fu) to sea in search of the fabled islands known as P'eng-lai, Fang-chang, and Ying-chou.

Tsou Yen's theory

According to Tsou Yen's theory, there are nine large continents (*ta chiu-chou*) in the world, and each is further divided into nine regions. The nine continents are separated from one another by vast oceans, and the nine regions of each continent are also separated from one another by a circling sea. China, known as the Spiritual Continent of the Red Region (*ch'ih-hsien shen-chou*), constitutes but one of the nine regions of a large continent. In other words, China occupies only one of the eighty-one divisions of the

For certain aspects of foreign relations of the Later Han period, readers are referred to Rafe de Crespigny, *Northern frontier: The policies and strategy of the Later Han empire* (Canberra, 1984), which was published while these pages were in press.

entire world. Moreover, in Tsou Yen's system, it is not even clear whether China is located in the central regions of its own continent.[1]

As Tsou Yen's theory increasingly gained currency, China's self-image of its geographical situation underwent a fundamental change. The classical identification of China with "all under Heaven" (*t'ien-hsia*) gradually gave way to the more realistic idea of China as that which lies "within the seas" (*hai-nei*). It is true that after the Ch'in-Han unification the Chinese empire continued to be referred to as "all under Heaven." But such a usage was made mainly on political grounds – to justify the emperor as Son of Heaven; it cannot be taken as an indication that Ch'in or Han Chinese still subscribed to the view that China embraced the whole world. The following example may be cited as an illustration. In 196 B.C., Kao-ti paid a visit to his home town, P'ei, and invited his old friends and village elders to a feast. At the height of the feast, the emperor composed and sang the famous "Song of the Great Wind," a line in which reads:

> Now that my might rules all within the seas (*hai-nei*),
> I have returned to my native village.[2]

Then, after the feast, he said to the elders that he owed to the people and place of P'ei his possession of all under Heaven (*t'ien-hsia*), for it was during his tenure as Lord of P'ei that his imperial career had started. This example clearly shows that "within the seas" was used in a geographical sense, indicating the territorial limits of China, whereas all under Heaven was a more purely political concept, synonymous with the modern term empire.

It is also important to note that virtually all the geographical texts of the late Warring States and Ch'in-Han periods refer to China by the more realistic term of "within the seas." These texts include the Yü-kung (Tribute of Yü) chapter in the *Book of documents* (*Shu ching*), the *Classic of mountains and seas* (*Shan-hai ching*),[3] the Yu-shih (Origins) chapter in the *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu,* and the Ti-hsing (Topography) chapter in the *Huai-nan-tzu*. The *Huai-nan-tzu* particularly shows the influence of Tsou Yen. It asserts that beyond China there are the eight extensions (*pa-yen*), and be-

1 *Shih-chi* 74, p. 2344; Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese philosophy*, trans. Derk Bodde (London and Princeton, 1952), Vol. I, pp. 160–61.

2 *SC* 8, p. 389 (Édouard Chavannes, *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien* [Paris, 1895–1905; Paris, 1969], Vol. II, p. 397; Burton Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian of China: Translated from the* Shih-chi *of Ssu-ma Ch'ien* [New York and London, 1961], Vol. II, p. 114). For the idea of *t'ien-hsia*, see Abe Takeo, *Chūgokujin no tenka kannen* (Kyoto, 1956), esp. pp. 83–89.

3 For the idea of "within the four seas" in the *Shu ching*, see James Legge, *The Shoo king, or the Book of historical documents*, Vol. IIIa of *The Chinese classics* (Oxford, 1893), p. 150 (The tribute of Yü). In the *Shan-hai ching* there are five chapters bearing the title *hai-nei* (chs. 10, 11, 12, 13 and 18).

yond these eight extensions there are the eight extremities (*pa-chi*).[4] According to this view, therefore, China forms only a small part of the entire world.

Moreover, as their geographical knowledge of the world grew with time, the Han Chinese even came to the realization that China was not necessarily the only civilized country in the world. This is clearly shown in the fact that the Later Han Chinese gave the Roman Empire (or, rather, the Roman Orient) the name of Great Ch'in (Ta Ch'in). According to the *Hou-Han shu*, the Roman Empire was so named precisely because its people and civilization were comparable to those of China.[5]

But if the Han Chinese were not sinocentric in the geographical sense, they were indeed sinocentric in the politico-cultural sense. For the order of the world as a whole was never their concern; rather, they were concerned with the establishment and maintenance of the Chinese world order, which was by definition sinocentric. The Han Chinese world order not only existed as an idea, but, more important, also expressed itself in an institutional form.

The five-zone theory

As an idea, the Han world order was defined mainly in terms of the so-called five-zone (*wu-fu*) theory.[6] According to this theory, China since the Hsia dynasty had been divided into five concentric and hierarchical zones or areas. The central zone (*tien-fu*) was the royal domain, under the direct rule of the king. The royal domain was immediately surrounded by the Chinese states established by the king, known collectively as the lords' zone (*hou-fu*). Beyond the *hou-fu* were Chinese states conquered by the reigning dynasty, which constituted the so-called pacified zone (*sui-fu* or *pin-fu*, guest zone). The last two zones were reserved for the barbarians. The Man and I barbarians lived outside the *sui-fu* or *pin-fu* in the controlled zone (*yao-fu*), which was so called because the Man and I were supposedly subject to Chinese control, albeit control of a rather loose kind. Finally, beyond the controlled zone lay the Jung and Ti barbarians, who were

4 *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* 13, p. 1a et seq.; *Huai-nan-tzu* 4, pp. 4b-6b (John S. Major, "Topography and cosmology in early Han thought: Chapter four of the *Huai-nan-tzu*," Diss. Harvard Univ., 1973, pp. 49f.). 5 *Hou-Han shu* 89, p. 2919.

6 Probably the earliest reference to the *wu-fu* will be found in the *Shu ching*: see Bernhard Karlgren, "The Book of documents," *BMFEA*, 22 (1950), 11–12 (Kao Yao mo); Legge, *The Shoo king*, p. 74. See also Lien-sheng Yang, "Historical notes on the Chinese world order," in *The Chinese world order: Traditional China's foreign relations*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 20, 292 note 1. My summary of the nine-zone and five-zone theories is based on various texts. See Legge, *The Shoo king*, pp. 142–49 (The tribute of Yü); *Kuo-yü* 1, pp. 3a-3b; Sun I-jang, *Chou-li cheng-i* 64 (Vol. XVIII), pp. 90–95; Sun, *Chou-li cheng-i* (*SPPY* ed.) 71 (Vol. XX), pp. 80–84.

basically their own masters in the wild zone (*huang-fu*) where the sinocentric world order reached its natural end.

The relationships to the center of these five levels in the hierarchy are also expressed in terms of the tribute (including local products and services) that the various zones offered to the king. In principle, tribute was offered by the five groups of people in descending order from the royal domain to the wild zone. Thus, the king received tribute from the central zone on a daily basis, from the lords' zone monthly, from the pacified zone trimonthly, from the controlled zone annually, and from the wild zone only once.

Needless to say, the five-zone theory describes an ideal type and therefore cannot be accepted at its face value. However, there are two compelling reasons for us to take this theory seriously. First, unlike the so-called nine-zone (*chiu-fu*) theory expounded by some Han exegetes, which is largely fictitious, the five-zone theory is basically supported by historical realities. One of the most critical of modern historians believes that a three-zone structure did exist in early historic China; namely, the royal domain, the lords' zone, and the controlled zone.[7] In 221 B.C. in a joint memorial to the First Emperor of Ch'in, a group of court ministers (including Li Ssu) said:[8]

> Formerly, in the time of the Five [Legendary] Emperors, [the royal domain] was one thousand square *li*. Beyond it were the lords' zone (*hou-fu*) and the barbarians' zone (*i-fu*). Some of the lords came to pay homage at the court and some did not. The Son of Heaven had no control over them.

This realistic account of the Chinese world order in remote antiquity can be amply confirmed in authentic pre-Ch'in texts. Obviously, it was on such a factual basis that the five-zone theorists idealized the actual Chinese world order by way of creative imagination and under the influence of Five Phases (*wu-hsing*) thought. They created the fictitious pacified zone out of the lords' zone and the fictitious wild zone out of the controlled zone.

Second, the five-zone theory was not an empty idea. On the contrary, it played an important historical role in the development of foreign relations during the Han period. As a matter of fact, the Han Chinese could hardly perceive the world order apart from both the language and the frame of reference of this theory. For instance, in 117 B.C. Wu-ti spoke of Yang-chou (modern Kiangsu and Chekiang) as the controlled zone in the Hsia-Shang-Chou period; and in A.D. 14 Wang Mang made a systematic attempt to apply the five-zone theory to his new world order.[9]

7 Ku Chieh-kang, *Shih-lin tsa-shih* (Peking, 1963), pp. 1–19.
8 *SC* 6, p. 236 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 125).
9 For Wu-ti's reference to "controlled zone," see *HS* 63, p. 2759. For Wang Mang, see *HS* 99B, pp. 4136–37, which agrees with Sun, *Chou-li cheng-i* 71 (Vol. XX), pp. 80–84 (cited above in note 6).

At times, the theory even affected Han policy decisions in the realm of foreign relations. When Hu-han-yeh, the Hsiung-nu *shan-yü*, was to pay homage at the Han court in 51 B.C., Hsiao Wang-chih proposed to Hsüan-ti that the *shan-yü* be treated as head of a state of rival status (*ti-kuo*), rather than a subject. Hsiao justified his suggestion on the grounds that since the Hsiung-nu belonged to the wild zone, they could not be expected to pay regular homage at the Han court. The emperor adopted Hsiao's proposal.[10] According to the five-zone theory, barbarians of the wild zone needed to offer tribute to the king only once. Here we see a classic example of how this theory was translated into action. The fact that Pan Ku found it convenient to fit the reality of Han foreign relations into the five-zone framework is sufficient indication that the theory itself constituted an integral part of that reality.

The tributary system

Central to the institutional expressions of the Han understanding of world order is the development of the famous tributary system. It is true that certain prototypical tributary practices can be traced back even to the Shang period. But there can be little doubt that the institutionalization of such practices and their systematic application in the realm of foreign relations was a unique Han contribution. The reason is not far to seek: the problems of foreign relations faced by the Han empire were fundamentally different in nature from those of pre-imperial China. New relations required new institutional expressions. The Han tributary system underwent a long and complicated process of evolution, as will be shown below in the various sections dealing with individual alien groups. Here, however, a few general observations are in order.[11]

To begin with, it is important to point out that the tributary system must not be understood only in its narrow sense, as a normative pattern by which Chinese foreign relations were regulated. In its broader sense, the idea of tribute (*kung*) was a universal principle of the Han empire, applied to the Chinese people as well. For instance, it was required that local products be presented to the court as tribute from various regions. In theory, then, it may be justifiable to say that the difference between the Chinese and the non-Chinese under the tributary system was a matter of degree.

As scholars generally agree, the Five-zone theory, basically and in realis-

10 *HS* 78, p. 3282; Yang, "Historical notes," p. 31.

11 For a fuller treatment, see Ying-shih Yü, *Trade and expansion in Han China: A study in the structure of Sino-barbarian economic relations* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967).

tic terms, described no more than a relative dichotomy between the inner and the outer areas. China was the inner region relative to the outer region of the barbarians, just as the royal domain was, relative to the outer lords' zone, an inner zone, and the controlled zone became the inner area relative to the wild zone on the periphery of Chinese civilization. Understood in this way, then, we find that the institutional realities of the Han world order actually fit quite well with the five-zone scheme.

As we know, the early Han royal domain was located in the capital area known as Kuan-chung (within the passes), which was separated from the rest of the empire by four passes (*kuan*). Through much of the Former Han period, the Kuan-chung area was so vigilantly guarded that people passing through the barriers were required to carry passports (*chuan*). Beyond this area were the commanderies (*chün*), which were divided into two categories. According to Wei Chao, a third-century scholar, commanderies in interior China were called inner commanderies (*nei-chün*), while those along the frontiers with fortresses and barriers against the barbarians were called outer commanderies (*wai-chün*), also known, respectively, as close commanderies (*chin-chün*) and remote commanderies (*yüan-chün*).[12] It can be readily seen that the inner commanderies and the outer commanderies are quite comparable to the lords' zone and the pacified zone.

Finally, it is still more interesting to note that, corresponding roughly to the distinction between the controlled zone and the wild zone, the Han government also classified non-Chinese peoples into two major groups, outer barbarians (*wai Man-I*) and inner barbarians. Generally speaking, the outer barbarians lived beyond the Han frontiers and therefore were not under direct imperial rule. By contrast, the inner barbarians had not only settled within the Han empire, but had also undertaken the obligation to guard the Han frontiers. During the Han period, the technical term "border guarding" (*pao-sai*) was frequently applied to the inner barbarians. Thus we have the so-called frontier-guarding barbarians, frontier-guarding Ch'iang, frontier-guarding Wu-huan, etc.[13]

Moreover, this inner-outer distinction was institutionalized along administrative lines. Outer barbarians, after offering submission to the Han empire, were normally given the status of a dependent state (*shu-kuo*). While a Chinese official (*shu-kuo tu-wei*) would be appointed to take charge of the

12 *Han shu* 8, p. 241; *HS* 99B, p. 4136 (Homer H. Dubs, *The History of the Former Han dynasty* [Baltimore, 1938–55], Vol. III, p. 343).

13 *HHS* 15, p. 581; *HHS* 19, p. 717; *HHS* 24, p. 855. For the term *pao* and its connotations, see Lien-sheng Yang, "Hostages in Chinese history," in his *Studies in Chinese institutional history* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), pp. 43–57; and Michael Loewe, *Records of Han administration* (Cambridge, 1967), Vol. II, p. 202.

dependent state; the barbarians were as a rule allowed to follow their own social customs and led their own way of life. In theory, they now became inner subjects (*nei-shu*) of the empire, but in reality they continued to enjoy the freedom of the outer barbarians. Evidence indicates that at least in Former Han times several Hsiung-nu and Ch'iang dependent states lay outside Han territory. On the other hand, surrendered barbarians who lived within the empire were organized into "divisions" (*pu*) and put under direct Han control. When conditions were right, the imperial government would then take the final step and transform the divisions into regular commanderies and districts. Many examples of this process are reported for the second and third centuries A.D.

This discussion should not be taken as an assertion that the Han government succeeded completely in imposing the Chinese tributary system on non-Chinese peoples. It is intended only to show that the Han Chinese did have a clear vision of a Chinese world order based on inner-outer distinctions, and moreover made serious efforts to impose it on neighboring non-Chinese peoples. In actual practice, it must be emphatically pointed out, the Han tributary system never achieved the same degree of stability in the realm of foreign relations as it did internally. The balance of the system hung on a host of factors, such as the rise and fall of various foreign powers, which lay largely beyond Chinese control. The Han success in maintaining a desired world order was therefore at best limited. However, it is also clear that foreign relations in Han China will make little sense if viewed in isolation from the Han perception of the Chinese world order. For the latter was from the very beginning a built-in feature of the former.

THE HSIUNG-NU

The first great challenge faced by Han statesmen in their shaping of a foreign policy emanated from the steppe-based empire to the north, that of the Hsiung-nu.[14] As the problem of the Hsiung-nu remained central to the world order of Han China through much of that period, it is only logical that we begin our account by examining the changing relations between the two most powerful peoples in East Asia.

14 These are not to be identified with the Huns. See Manfred G. Rashke, "New studies in Roman commerce with the east," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt, Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung* II, 9, ed. Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase (Berlin and New York, 1978), Part II, pp. 612, 697 note 101. For the material evidence of the way of life of the Hsiung-nu, see S. I. Rudenko, *Die Kultur der Hsiung-nu und die Hügelgräber von Noin Ula*, trans. Helmut Pollems (Bonn, 1969).

Mao-tun and his confederacy

In 209 B.C., only three years before the founding of the Han dynasty, the newly arisen steppe confederacy of the Hsiung-nu found a new *shan-yü*[15] in the person of Mao-tun, who took the throne after murdering his father. Mao-tun was such an extraordinarily able and dynamic leader that within the span of a few short years he succeeded not only in forging an unprecedented internal unity among the various Hsiung-nu tribes, but also in expanding the empire on almost all sides. To the east, Mao-tun crushed the powerful Tung-Hu (eastern barbarians) of eastern Mongolia and western Manchuria. These groups had pressed the Hsiung-nu hard since Mao-tun's rise to power. To the west he launched a successful military campaign against the Yüeh-chih in the Kansu corridor; these peoples were hereditary enemies of the Hsiung-nu to whom Mao-tun had been sent as a hostage by his father. To the north he conquered a number of nomadic peoples, including the Ting-ling in southern Siberia. To the south, as a result of the collapse of the Chinese defense system in the Ordos, he was able to recover all the lands in that region which had been taken from the Hsiung-nu by the Ch'in general Meng T'ien.[16]

Within these vast new territories, Mao-tun then established the annual meeting place of the Hsiung-nu at Lung-ch'eng, which was located somewhere in Koshu-Tsaidam (in modern Outer Mongolia). Lung-ch'eng served as the capital of the Hsiung-nu confederacy, where all important religious and governmental matters were centrally administered. In the autumn of each year a mass meeting of the Hsiung-nu was held in the neighborhood of Lung-ch'eng at which a general census was taken of the people as well as of their animals.[17]

It was also under Mao-tun's leadership that a more mature form of political organization began to emerge within the Hsiung-nu confederacy. It was a dualistic system of the left and the right, with the former having

15 *Shan-yü* is a Chinese transcription of the title by which this people referred to their ruler in their own language. Chinese renderings will be used to refer to Hsiung-nu titles and names, as we have no way of reconstructing any substantial part of the Hsiung-nu language, and in fact know these terms only through Chinese writings. Thus, the names of the kingships (Jih-chu king, etc.), and even the very name of this people, the Hsiung-nu, are Chinese; and the latter has in fact a strong pejorative taint, the Chinese characters used having the meaning of "fierce slave." The names of a number of other non-Chinese peoples encountered in this period and later are also generally referred to by the name given them by the Chinese in the Chinese language, such as the Wu-huan, Hsien-pi, etc. 16 For Meng T'ien, see Chapter 1 above, pp. 61f.

17 *SC* 110, p. 2892 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, p. 164); *HS* 94A, p. 3752. Translations of the passages from *HS* 94A and other chapters of the *Han shu* referred to are also included in J. J. M. de Groot, *Chinesische Urkunden zur Geschichte Asiens*. Vol. I *Die Hunnen der vorchristlichen Zeit*, Vol. II *Die Westlande Chinas in der vorchristlichen Zeit* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1921–26). However, owing to the rarity of that work, references are not included in the footnotes to this volume.

precedence over the latter. As the *Shih-chi* says, "Under the *shan-yü* are 'wise kings' of the left and right, the left and right Lu-li kings, left and right generals, left and right commandants, left and right household administrators, and left and right Ku-tu marquises."[18] The left and right branches of the Hsiung-nu were divided on a regional basis, the left being in charge of the eastern portion of the empire, the right controlling the west. The *shan-yü*, the supreme ruler of the Hsiung-nu, exercised a direct authority over the central territory. Thus, by the time Kao-ti turned his attention to face the Hsiung-nu threat, Mao-tun had not only basically completed the territorial expansion of his new steppe confederation, but also consolidated his personal control over all the Hsiung-nu tribes as well as the conquered peoples. In 200 B.C., therefore, he was quite ready for the historic encounter with his Chinese counterpart on a battlefield.[19]

For his part, having accomplished unification at home, Kao-ti was now determined to force the Hsiung-nu out of China and establish Han control over the northern frontiers. It may be noted that the Hsiung-nu threat to the Han empire was twofold: their constant incursions into Chinese border regions, and the divisive political influence they exerted among frontier Chinese, especially powerful local leaders. The political threat was nowhere expressed more clearly than in the problem of defection. In the early years of the Han dynasty, Chinese defectors to the Hsiung-nu included such important men as Liu Hsin (king of Han), Lu Wan (king of Yen), Ch'en Hsi (chancellor of Tai). It is also important to point out that some of the Han frontier generals had previously been merchants, and therefore probably maintained trading relations with the Hsiung-nu that had begun before the founding of the dynasty. Their loyalty to the Han was anything but unquestionable. A popular saying among fugitives in China in this period ran thus: "Northward we can flee to the Hsiung-nu and southward to the Yüeh," which indicates that even the common people had yet to develop a political identification with the Han dynasty.

Prompted by considerations of this sort, Kao-ti seized the opportunity of the king of Han's surrender to the Hsiung-nu to launch a massive military campaign against Mao-tun in the winter of 200 B.C. The emperor personally led an army of over 300,000 and pursued the Hsiung-nu as far as the city of P'ing-ch'eng (near modern Ta-t'ung in Shansi), only to fall into an ambush set by Mao-tun. Before all the Han foot soldiers could join the emperor, Mao-tun with 400,000 of his best cavalry suddenly turned and

18 *SC* 110, p. 2890 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, p. 163); *HS* 94A, p. 3751.

19 For the rise of the Hsiung-nu and their state, see Ma Ch'ang-shou, *Pei-Ti yü Hsiung-nu* (Peking, 1962), pp. 22–30; Mori Masao, "Kyōdo no kokka," *Shigaku zasshi*, 59:5 (1950), 1–21; Tezuka Takayoshi, "Kyōdo bokkō shiron," *Shien*, 31:2 (1971), 59–72.

surrounded the Han camp, cutting the emperor's group off from supplies and reinforcements. Kao-ti remained caught in the trap for seven days, only narrowly escaping capture.[20]

The marriage treaty system

The battle of P'ing-ch'eng played a decisive role in the formulation of a system of dynastic marriages called *ho-ch'in*, (harmonious kinship) which set the pattern for relations between Han and the Hsiung-nu till the early years of Wu-ti's reign (141–87 B.C.). After the defeat at P'ing-ch'eng, Kao-ti had come to realize that it was beyond his power to seek a military solution to the Hsiung-nu problem. He therefore decided to adopt the suggestions of a court official named Liu Ching on how some sort of rapprochement might be effected. In 198 B.C. the emperor sent Liu Ching to negotiate peace with Mao-tun, and a settlement was eventually reached between the two parties.[21]

The first *ho-ch'in* treaty included the following four terms of agreement: first, a Han princess would be given in marriage to the *shan-yü;* secondly, several times a year the Han would send "gifts" to the Hsiung-nu, including silk, liquor, rice, and other kinds of food, each in fixed quantities; thirdly, Han and Hsiung-nu would become "brotherly states," equal in status; fourthly, neither side would venture beyond the frontier as marked by the Great Wall.[22] The treaty became formally effective in the winter of 198 B.C., when Liu Ching escorted a young woman who was allegedly an imperial princess to wed the leader of the Hsiung-nu.

A few observations should be made here on the manner of the application of the provisions of the treaty. First, as the name suggests, a primary feature of the structure of relations between the Han and the Hsiung-nu as worked out by Liu Ching was the alliance in marriage of the ruling houses of the two empires. There seems to have been an understanding that each time a new ruler came to the throne on either side, a Han princess would have to be sent to the Hsiung-nu, presumably as an assurance that the alliance held. Thus a second Han princess was sent to marry Mao-tun in 192 B.C., shortly after the accession of Hui-ti, and both Wen-ti and Ching-ti sent a princess to marry the *shan-yü*.[23]

20 *HS* 1B, pp. 63f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 115); *HS* 94A, p. 3753; *SC* 93 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. I, pp. 233f.); *SC* 110, p. 2894 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, p. 165). For the allegation that some of the Han generals had been merchants, see *HS* 1B, p. 69 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 127).

21 For Liu Ching, originally called Lou Ching, see *SC* 99, pp. 2719f. (Watson, *Records*, Vol. I, p. 289); and *HS* 43, pp. 2122f.

22 For a discussion of the Great Wall, see Chapter 1 above, pp. 61f., 101f.

23 *HS* 2, p. 89 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 181); *HS* 5, p. 144 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 315); *HS* 94A, p. 3759.

Secondly, the extent of the Han "gifts" to the Hsiung-nu was fixed in each treaty. In fact a renewal of the treaty almost surely entailed an increase of "gifts" on the part of Han. It is reported that Wen-ti increased the gifts to the Hsiung-nu to one thousand pieces of gold a year and that Wu-ti also sent the Hsiung-nu lavish gifts in order to reaffirm the alliance. From 192 B.C. to 135 B.C. the treaty was renewed no less than nine times. We can safely assume that Han paid a higher price for each new treaty. But the border problem between Han China and the Hsiung-nu was never clearly settled. In 162 B.C. Wen-ti quoted a decree of Kao-ti to the effect that the land north of the Great Wall was to receive its commands from the *shan-yü*, while that within the wall was the Han emperor's. However, no evidence suggests that Mao-tun ever expressed his willingness to respect China's demand.[24]

The Hsiung-nu empire continued to expand under the able leadership of Mao-tun. With territorial expansion, his attitude toward the Han court grew increasingly arrogant, and his appetite for Chinese goods became ever more insatiable. In 192 B.C. Mao-tun even asked for the hand of Empress Lü. His letter reads:[25]

> I am a lonely widowed ruler, born amidst the marshes and brought up on the wild steppes in the land of cattle and horses. I have often come to the border of China wishing to travel in China. Your Majesty is also a widowed ruler living in a life of solitude. Both of us are without pleasures and lack any way to amuse ourselves. It is my hope that we can exchange that which we have for that which we are lacking.

The empress was furious and wanted to launch an attack on Mao-tun. However, when she was reminded of the P'ing-ch'eng disaster, the empress composed herself and instead asked a court official to write a reply on her behalf. The reply says:

> My age is advanced and my vitality is weakening. Both my hair and teerh are falling out, and I cannot even walk steadily. The *shan-yü* must have heard exaggerated reports. I am not worthy of his lowering himself. But my country has done nothing wrong, and I hope he will spare ir.

It is clear that the empress was actually begging the *shan-yü* not to invade China.

Mao-tun died in 174 B.C. Shortly before his death he made a number of important conquests. He not only drove the Yüeh-chih people out of the Kansu corridor completely, but also asserted his presence in the Western

24 *SC* 110, p. 2902 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, p. 173); *HS* 94A, p. 3762. For the *ho-ch'in* treaties, see Tezuka Takayoshi, "Kan sho Kyōdo to no washin jōyaku ni kansuru ni san no mondai," *Shien*, 12:2 (1938), 11–34; Yü, *Trade and expansion*, pp. 9f. 25 *HS* 94A, pp. 3754f.

Regions (*hsi-yü*), which stretched into Central Asia. From a position of strength Mao-tun then turned to China to renegotiate the treaty. He wrote a threatening letter to Wen-ti, styling himself the "great *shan-yü* of the Hsiung-nu, established by Heaven." Once again the question of peace or war arose in a heated discussion in the Han court. After carefully weighing the strengths of both sides, Wen-ti decided to accept Mao-tun's terms.[26]

Mao-tun was fortunate to be followed by an energetic successor, his son Chi-chu, known in the Chinese historical record as the *shan-yü* Lao-shang (r. 174–160 B.C.). Lao-shang continued his father's expansionist policies. In the west, he continued to press the Yüeh-chih, who were at this time just resettling in the Ili Valley. In the east, he made further inroads into Han territories. On one occasion his scouts penetrated to a point as deep as the vicinity of Ch'ang-an, the Han capital. Lao-shang also succeeded in introducing a new element into the marriage treaties, adding terms which provided for border trade.

Although private trade between the Chinese and the Hsiung-nu probably had been going on along the border for a very long time, a large-scale government-sponsored market system did not come into existence until Wen-ti's reign, if we give credence to a memorial of Chia I. This is certainly consistent with his general theory that the Hsiung-nu could be controlled through the use of Han China's superior material culture. At the same time there were not lacking those who were ready to warn the Hsiung-nu of the trap into which they might fall.[27] Furthermore, the remark made by Pan Ku that "Wen-ti opened border trade with the Hsiung-nu" may also support the authenticity of this memorial.[28] It is clear that the border market system was imposed on the Han court by the Hsiung-nu. Judging by the date of Chia I's death, 169 B.C., it is safe to conclude that the agreement to establish official border trade must have been reached between Wen-ti and Lao-shang. As Chia I's memorial makes clear, border trade met the needs of ordinary Hsiung-nu, who probably did not benefit much from the imperial gifts showered on the *shan-yü* and other Hsiung-nu nobility.

While much had been gained by the Hsiung-nu under the terms of the marriage treaties, there was practically nothing in the system that could justify the high cost for Han China to keep it operative, except a badly

26 *SC* 110, pp. 2896f. (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, pp. 167f.); *HS* 94A, p. 3756.

27 *Hsin-shu* (SPPY ed.) 4, pp. 5a–5b. For the warning given to the Hsiung-nu by a Chinese deserter named Chung-hang Yüeh, see *SC* 110, p. 2899 (Yü, *Trade and expansion*, p. 37; Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, p. 170).

28 *SC* 110, p. 2899 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, p. 170); *HS* 94B, p. 3831. For Chia I's suggestion of the "five baits" whereby the Hsiung-nu's martial qualities would be weakened, see *HS* 48, p. 2265 (Yen Shih-ku's note no. 3).

kept promise of nonaggression on the part of the *shan-yü*. Chinese records show that the *shan-yü* did not take the peace treaty seriously during much of the early period, when relations were cemented by intermarriage between the two imperial houses. In 166 B.C., Lao-shang personally led 140,000 cavalry to invade An-ting (in modern Kansu), reaching as far as Yung, where the Han emperors later had their summer retreat. In 158 B.C. his successor Chün-ch'en (r. 160–126) sent 30,000 cavalry to attack Shang commandery (modern Inner Mongolia and northern Shensi) and another 30,000 to Yün-chung (also in Inner Mongolia).[29]

War with the Hsiung-nu

From the Chinese point of view, therefore, the style of relations that had been worked out by Liu Ching was both costly and ineffective. As we have seen, it was most fully developed during the reign of Wen-ti; but it was also Wen-ti who was most anxious to do away with it, and abandonment of the system entailed war with the Hsiung-nu. During the middle of his reign, the emperor was making every preparation for a possible armed confrontation. Together with the imperial guards, he wore a military uniform, practiced horse-riding and shooting in the Shang-lin Park, and studied the military arts.[30] Being a cautious and frugal person, and with his empire only barely recovered from internal disorder, he refrained from taking the offensive against the northern nomads. China would have to wait a little longer to shake off the yoke of the *ho-ch'in* system. The time came in 134 B.C., during the reign of Wu-ti, when the empire had been consolidated politically, militarily, and financially, and more important was led by an energetic, ambitious, and adventurous faction within the court.

In 135 B.C. the Hsiung-nu requested a renewal of the treaty. When the matter was brought up for discussion in a court conference, the majority opinion, as usual, was in favor of peace. Wu-ti therefore acceded to the Hsiung-nu request. But the emperor's decision was apparently made with much reluctance, for a year later (134 B.C.) he reversed the decision, adopting the plot of a frontier merchant to trap the *shan-yü* in an ambush in the city of Ma-i (in Yen-men commandery, modern Shansi). The plot was discovered by the *shan-yü* and the ambush came to nothing. But the break between Han and the Hsiung-nu was complete, and the pattern of

29 *HS* 4, pp. 125, 130 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 255, 265); *HS* 94A, pp. 3761, 3764; *SC* 110, pp. 2901, 2904 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, pp. 172, 175). For the proximity of Yung to Ch'ang-an and its importance as a religious center, see Michael Loewe, *Crisis and conflict in Han China* (London, 1974), p. 167. 30 For Wen-ti's behavior, see *HS* 94B, p. 3831.

marriage alliance and Han appeasement that had characterized relations between the two for over seventy years came to a decisive end.[31]

Full-scale war did not break out until the autumn of 129 B.C., when 40,000 Chinese cavalrymen were sent to make a surprise attack on the Hsiung-nu at the border markets. The Han forces chose the border markets as their first targets because even after the aborted ambush, Hsiung-nu had continued to come, often in large numbers, to these places for trade. In 127 B.C. the general Wei Ch'ing led an army across the border from Yün-chung toward Lung-hsi and took the Ordos back from the Hsiung-nu. Immediately after this conquest, 100,000 Chinese were sent to settle in the area and the two commanderies known as Shuo-fang and Wu-yüan were created. The loss of the Ordos was the first major setback for the Hsiung-nu empire since the days of Mao-tun.[32]

In 121 B.C. the Hsiung-nu were dealt another severe blow at the hands of the general Huo Ch'ü-ping, who ranks with Wei Ch'ing among the rare geniuses in Chinese military history.[33] Huo led a force of light cavalry westward out of Lung-hsi and within six days had fought his way through five Hsiung-nu kingdoms, wresting both the Yen-chih and Ch'i-lien mountain ranges from them. The Hsiung-nu Hun-yeh king was forced to surrender with 40,000 men. Then in 119 B.C. both Huo and Wei, each leading 50,000 cavalrymen and 30,000 to 50,000 footsoldiers, and advancing along different routes, forced the *shan-yü* and his court to flee north of the Gobi.

Although Han won major victories in these campaigns, it was still far from winning the war. Han had also suffered heavy losses of manpower and other resources. According to official reports, each side lost 80,000 to 90,000 men. Out of the 140,000 horses the Han forces had brought with them into the desert, less than 30,000 were brought back to China. Owing to the critical shortage of horses, Han was not able to mobilize another attack on the Hsiung-nu in the desert.[34] Moreover, according to the analysis of a Han military specialist in the beginning of the Christian era, two difficulties in particular stood in the way of any long-lasting Han campaign against the Hsiung-nu. First, there was the logistical problem of food supply. On average, for a three hundred days' journey one soldier would consume 360 liters of dried rice, which had to be carried by ox. But the

31 *HS* 52, pp. 2398f.; *HS* 94A, pp. 3765f.; *SC* 110, pp. 2904f. (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, pp. 176f.).

32 *HS* 94A, p. 3766; *SC* 110, p. 2906 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, pp. 177f.).

33 For these two generals, see *SC* 111 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, pp. 193f.); *HS* 55. For a tabulated list of these campaigns, see Michael Loewe, "The campaigns of Han Wu-ti," in *Chinese ways in warfare*, ed. Frank A. Kierman, Jr., and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), pp. 111f.

34 For losses of men and horses and the expense of campaigning, see *HS* 24B, p. 1159 (Nancy Lee Swann, *Food and money in ancient China* [Princeton, 1950] p. 274); *SC* 110, pp. 2910f. (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, pp. 182f.); *SC* 111, p. 2938 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, p. 209); *HS* 94A, p. 3771; and Loewe, "Campaigns of Han Wu-ti," p. 97.

food for each ox meant an additional 400 liters of weight. Past experience indicated that the ox would die within one hundred days in the desert, and the remaining 240 liters of dried rice would still be far too heavy for the soldier to carry. Secondly, the weather in the Hsiung-nu lands also presented an insurmountable difficulty to the Han soldiers, who could never carry enough fuel to meet the killing cold of the winter season. These two difficulties explain, as the analyst rightly pointed out, why no single Han expedition against the Hsiung-nu had ever lasted one hundred days.[35]

The problems involved in feeding Han soldiers on such expeditions may be illustrated by the case of the general Li Ling. In 99 B.C., when Li's army was surrounded by the Hsiung-nu near Tun-huang, he gave each of his soldiers two *sheng* (0.4 liters) of dried grain and a piece of ice, which was to sustain them as they scattered and fled the encirclement. They were then ordered to reassemble at a Han fort three days later. Extreme as this case may have been, it demonstrates that, when campaigning against the Hsiung-nu beyond the Chinese border, Han soldiers had to travel light and travel quickly if they were even to survive.[36]

As a result of these battles, however, a solid foundation was laid for Han expansion into the Western Regions. The lands previously occupied by the Hun-yeh king stretched west from the Kansu corridor to Lop Nor. After the surrender of the Hun-yeh king in 121 B.C., all the Hsiung-nu people moved out of the area, and the Han court may have established the commandery of Chiu-ch'üan there. Later on, three more commanderies – Chang-i, Tun-huang, and Wu-wei – were added, which together with Chiu-ch'üan have come to be known in Han history as "the four commanderies west of the [Yellow] River" (*ho-hsi ssu-chün*).[37] With the annexation of Ho-hsi the Han succeeded in separating the Hsiung-nu from the Ch'iang peoples to the south and also gained direct access to the whole of the Western Regions. As is amply shown in subsequent history, Ho-hsi became the most important base for Han military operations in the Western Regions.

The struggle for leadership of the Hsiung-nu

The period from 115 to 60 B.C. witnessed two related developments in the history of Han and Hsiung-nu relations. First, during this time Han and

35 These views were put forward to Wang Mang (A.D. 14) by Yen Yu: *HS* 94B, p. 3824.

36 *HS* 54, p. 2455.

37 There is some doubt regarding the dates when these four commanderies were founded. According to one view none of the four was set up before 104 B.C., and Wu-wei, which may have been the last to be founded, was established between 81 and 67 B.C. See Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, pp. 59f., 145 note 38.

Hsiung-nu struggled for mastery over the Western Regions, a contest that ended in a complete triumph for Han. Secondly, during this same period the Hsiung-nu empire collapsed, largely as a result of internal power struggles. This collapse led eventually to the submission of the *shan-yü* to Han, in 53 B.C. We shall deal with the first development in our discussion of the Western Regions in the next section; let us now concentrate on the second one.

The power struggle that flared up among the Hsiung-nu in 60 B.C. had its roots in the political structure of the steppe confederacy. As early as Mao-tun's time, the Hsiung-nu had developed a dualistic system of the right and left. Each group had its own regional base and enjoyed a high degree of political autonomy. The regional leader (king) had the power to appoint subordinate officers and officials. It is precisely this kind of regionalism that has led some historians to believe that the Hsiung-nu confederation preserved a certain element of "feudalism."[38] In these early periods, the positions were not necessarily hereditary nor were they held for life, and they were largely dominated by members of the royal house or its consort clans. But as the confederation expanded more regional kingdoms were created. Their kings were local leaders confirmed in their already existing positions.

It soon became clear that the original structures lacked the flexibility to accommodate new political realities, or to maintain effective cohesion. Around 120 B.C. we find that the two powerful kings in the western part of the Hsiung-nu empire (Hun-yeh and Hsiu-ch'u) were not assigned to the right group according to the dualistic principle. Both had their own lands and people, and the *shan-yü*'s control over them was minimal. This is clearly shown in the surrender in 120 B.C. of the Hun-yeh king to China with his 40,000 followers.[39] The growth of regionalism became even more visible in the first century B.C. There were cases in which local kings refused to attend the annual meetings held at the *shan-yü*'s court. Moreover, during this period several *shan-yü* were forced to develop power bases in regions originally under their control before they secured the throne. The five self-appointed *shan-yü* bidding for the throne in 57 B.C. all had their own regional followings.[40]

Connected with the growth of regionalism was a leadership crisis which lasted from 114 to 60 B.C. During this period the Hsiung-nu produced

38 On the feudal characteristics of the Hsiung-nu state, see William M. McGovern, *The early empires of Central Asia: A study of the Scythians and the Huns and the part they played in world history, with special reference to the Chinese sources* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1939), p. 118.

39 *HS* 6, p. 176 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 62); *HS* 94A, p. 3769.

40 *HS* 94B, p. 3795. For the political structure of the Hsiung-nu, see Hsieh Chien, "Hsiung-nu cheng-chih chih-tu ti yen-chiu," *CYYY*, 41:2 (1969), 231–71.

altogether seven *shan-yü*. With two exceptions, none of them reigned more than ten years, the most short-lived remaining on the throne for only one year. This is in sharp contrast to the long reigns of Mao-tun (209–174 B.C.) and Chün-ch'en (160–126 B.C.). Little wonder that the earlier *shan-yü* had been able to expand the empire and impose the treaties of marriage alliance on Han China. The later *shan-yü* were characterized not only by short-lived reigns, but also by weak leadership. Two of them, Chan-shih-lu (105–103 B.C.) and Hu-yen-t'i (85–69 B.C.), assumed the office of *shan-yü* while still children.[41] The former was nicknamed "Boy *shan-yü*," and the latter was tied to his mother's apron strings. The leadership crisis, it may be pointed out, was created to a large extent by the Hsiung-nu succession system. From Mao-tun's time to the middle of the second century B.C., we can discern a general pattern of father-to-son succession. Of the eleven successions that took place between the reigns of Mao-tun and Hsü-lü-ch'üan-ch'ü (68–60 B.C.), only four deviate from this pattern. Of these, one case resulted from rebellion and two from the fact that the *shan-yü*'s son was still a minor. Only the last one, Hsü-lü-ch'üan-ch'ü, took over the throne from his brother Hu-yen-t'i (85–69 B.C.) under apparently normal circumstances.[42]

With the succession normally passing from father to son, the reigning *shan-yü* usually had the power of choosing his successor. Such power could lead to trouble. The final and somewhat arbitrary decision of Mao-tun's father T'ou-man to make a younger son his heir blocked the accession of Mao-tun, the elder son; to secure the throne, Mao-tun was prepared to commit parricide. But by the end of the second century B.C., the succession had been largely regularized. In 105, the Hsiung-nu nobility evidently accepted as legitimate the succession of the "Boy *shan-yü*," despite possible misgivings regarding his character.[43] This pattern of succession was probably a stabilizing force in the early development of the Hsiung-nu empire, but it proved to be increasingly ineffective in meeting wartime emergencies in the first century B.C. This explains why Hu-han-yeh (58–31 B.C.) laid down the new rule that his eldest son, the heir apparent, must pass the throne on to a younger brother. Historical records show that from Hu-han-yeh's time to about the middle of the second century A.D., fraternal succession was indeed the norm.[44]

In 60 B.C., T'u-ch'i-t'ang, the "wise king of the right," became *shan-yü*

41 *HS* 94A, pp. 3774, 3782. 42 *HS* 94A, p. 3787.

43 For Mao-tun's action, see *HS* 94A, p. 3749. For the tendency of the "Boy *shan-yü*" to indulge in cruelty, as shown after his accession, see *HS* 94A, p. 3775.

44 For the problem of the succession, see Tezuka Takayoshi, "Kyōdo Zen'u sōzoku kō," *Shien*, 20:2 (1959), 17–27.

Wu-yen-chü-t'i. The new *shan-yü* was a man with a strong regional bias. No sooner had he come to the throne than he began to purge all those who had held high position under the former *shan-yü* and whose base lay in the left group. Thus antagonized, in 58 B.C. the nobility of the left put forward Hu-han-yeh as their own *shan-yü*. Wu-yen-chü-t'i was soon defeated by Hu-han-yeh in battle and took his own life.[45] But Hsiung-nu regionalism had by this time reached the point where even a semblance of unity was hardly possible. The year 57 B.C. saw a struggle for power among five regional groupings, each with its own *shan-yü*. By 54 B.C. the field had been reduced to two major factions, headed, respectively, by two contending brothers, *shan-yü* Hu-han-yeh and *shan-yü* Chih-chih. Defeated by Chih-chih, Hu-han-yeh abandoned his capital in the north and moved southward toward China in the hope of negotiating peace with the Han court.[46]

Hu-han-yeh was by no means the first *shan-yü* to express an interest in resuming peaceful relations with China after the breakdown of the marriage treaties in 134 B.C. As early as 119 B.C., when the Hsiung-nu suffered heavy losses at the hands of the generals Huo Ch'ü-ping and Wei Ch'ing, the *shan-yü* I-ch'ih-hsia (126–114) sent an envoy to the Han court requesting peace under the terms of a dynastic marriage. In reply, the Han government proposed that the *shan-yü* should be made an outer vassal (*wai-ch'en*). This infuriated the *shan-yü*, and the peace talks came to nothing.[47] In 107 B.C., the *shan-yü* Wu-wei (114–105) suspended all border raids in order to show his desire to restore the marriage alliance. The Han demand that the Hsiung-nu send their heir apparent to Ch'ang-an as a hostage again prevented the negotiations from yielding any result.[48] Several other peace attempts were also made in the first half of the first century B.C. without avail, because the Han court simply refused to settle for terms that were less than tributary.

Tributary relations with Han

At this point a word about the tributary system is in order. As noted in the previous section (pp. 381f.), the Han tributary system in its broadest sense was a universal principle applicable to Chinese and barbarian alike. But in actual practice the system, as applied in the realm of foreign relations, was constantly altered to meet the needs of different situations as they arose. In the case of the Hsiung-nu, the original tributary terms on which the Han

45 *HS* 94A, pp. 3789f. 46 *HS* 94B, pp. 3795f.
47 *HS* 94A, p. 3771. 48 *HS* 94A, p. 3773.

court insisted were threefold. First, the *shan-yü* or his representatives should come to the Han court to pay homage; secondly, the *shan-yü* should send a hostage prince, preferably the heir apparent; thirdly, the *shan-yü* should return the favor of imperial "gifts" by presenting "tribute" to the Han emperor. A comparison of these terms with the marriage treaties makes it clear that under the tributary system the political status of the Hsiung-nu was to be reduced from that of a "brotherly state" to that of an "outer vassal" (*wai-ch'en*). In terms of the five-zone theory, the Hsiung-nu would be classified, as the statesman Hsiao Wang-chih pointed out, in the wild zone of the Han empire.[49]

When the *shan-yü* Hu-han-yeh was moving toward an accommodation with China, he was fully aware of what types of new relations would have to be developed. In 53 B.C. a group of the Hsiung-nu nobility strongly opposed the idea of submission when the matter was brought up in Hu-han-yeh's court meeting. They argued that once the Hsiung-nu humiliated themselves by becoming a vassal state of Han, they would immediately lose their leadership among the various peoples outside China, which had hitherto been unquestioned. But the I-ch'ih-tzu king of the left, a leader of the peace party, responded to this argument by pointing out:[50]

> Han's power in now at its peak. Wu-sun and other walled states have all become China's vassals. By contrast, we Hsiung-nu have been declining in power since the days of the *shan-yü* Chü-ti-hou (101–97 B.C.) and there is no way for us to restore our fallen fortunes. In spite of all our exertions, we have experienced scarcely a single day of tranquility. At present our very security depends upon whether we submit to the Han or not. What better course is there for us to follow?

This view received Hu-han-yeh's full support, and the decision to accept the terms offered by the Han court was finally reached.

After the meeting, Hu-han-yeh sent his son, the "wise king of the right" Shu-lü-ch'ü-t'ang, to the Han court as a hostage prince. In the following year (52 B.C.) he filed a formal statement with officials at the border commandery of Wu-yüan, indicating that he intended to pay personal homage to the emperor on the Chinese New Year in 51 B.C. He thus fulfilled in minutest detail all the forms required under the Han tributary system.

From the point of view of the Han court, Hu-han-yeh's homage trip was undoubtedly the most important single event in the history of relations with the Hsiung-nu. And it was indeed a major change in the pattern of relations that had developed since Kao-ti's humiliating defeat at P'ing-

49 For the principles inherent in the new type of terms, see *SC* 110, p. 2913 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, p. 186). For Hsiao Wang-chih, see *HS* 78, p. 3282; *HS* 94B, p. 3832. 50 *HS* 94B, p. 3797.

ch'eng in 200 B.C. Partly as a measure of expediency, but possibly also overwhelmed by the unprecedented triumph, the Han court accorded the *shan-yü* honors not normally sanctioned, affording the *shan-yü* a "loose rein."[51] The *shan-yü* was treated more as the head of a rival state than as a vassal. During the imperial audience, he was assigned a place higher than all the other princes and lords. When the master of ceremonies formally introduced him to the throne, he was called not by his personal name, but by his official title, as a servant of the emperor (*ch'en*). Moreover, he was even excused from performing the ritual of prostration before the throne.

On the financial and material side, Hu-han-yeh was also amply rewarded for his participation in the tributary system.[52] During his stay at the capital he received the following payments from the emperor: 5 kilograms of gold, 200,000 cash (*ch'ien*), 77 suits of clothes, 8,000 bales of silken fabrics, and 1,500 kilograms of silk floss. He was also given fifteen horses. When Hu-han-yeh returned home, 680 kiloliters of grain were sent to him.

The financial part of the tributary system proved to be particularly attractive to the Hsiung-nu. Since the first act of homage was handsomely rewarded by the Han court, Hu-han-yeh asked to perform a second one in 50 B.C. and presented tribute to the emperor in person in 49 B.C. This time the imperial gift was increased to 110 suits of clothing, 9,000 pieces of silken fabrics, and 2,000 kilograms of silk floss. From 51 to 1 B.C., transfers of silk to the Hsiung-nu in connection with the *shan-yü*'s homages were as shown in Table 10.

Probably because of his constant fear of an attack by his brother, the rival *shan-yü* Chih-chih, Hu-han-yeh did not dare to make many trips to China. This was at least his own explanation of the long interval between his second homage in 49 B.C. and the third one in 33 B.C.[53] There may have been some truth in Hu-han-yeh's excuse; it was only shortly before 33 B.C. that Chih-chih was eliminated. In 36 B.C. an intrepid junior officer named Ch'en T'ang had enlisted the help of Kan Yen-shou, protector-general of the Western Regions, to assemble an expeditionary force that succeeded in defeating Chih-chih and sending his head back as a trophy to Ch'ang-an. This venture had been planned locally, without the prior approval of the central government; it had even involved the proclamation of an imperial edict without due authority. The two officers had seen fit to act in this way, on their own initiative, as there were serious doubts whether they would be granted permission to act had it been asked. Their fears were only too well grounded, as they were treated with scant generosity or even

51 For the concept of the "loose reign policy" (*chi-mi*), which deliberately refrained from imposing regular bureaucratic control over non-Chinese peoples, see Yang, "Historical notes," p. 31.

52 *HS* 94B, p. 3798. 53 *HS* 94B, p. 3803.

TABLE 10

Imperial gifts to the Hsiung-nu

Year (B.C.)	Silk floss (catties)	Silk fabric (bales)
51	1,500	8,000
49	2,000	9,000
33	4,000	18,000
25	5,000	20,000
1	7,500	30,000

recognition of their achievement when the facts were duly reported to Ch'ang-an. At this time, Han statesmen were not eager to enter into entanglements far from home.[54]

When the situation at home required his presence, the *shan-yü* would send a personal representative to bring tribute to the Han court in his stead. For instance, when *shan-yü* Fu-chu-lei took over the throne from Hu-han-yeh in 31 B.C., the circumstances surrounding his succession were somewhat suspect. He sent a new hostage prince to China right away, and in 28 B.C. sent a king to present tribute. But it was not until 25 B.C. that he managed to come himself to render homage.

For its part, the Han court attached a great deal of political importance to the *shan-yü*'s homage. As is clearly indicated in Table 10, the Han court encouraged the *shan-yü* to come by increasing imperial gifts for each and every visit made by a *shan-yü* to pay homage. As a matter of fact, the tributary system was maintained at a cost much higher than the earlier system of marital alliance. In 89 B.C., for instance, when the *shan-yü* negotiated with the Han court for a renewal of the marriage pact, he asked only that the annual payment be increased to 400 kiloliters of wine, 100 kiloliters of grain, and 10,000 bales of silk, which indicates that the payments made under the earlier treaties (*ho-ch'in*) had been below these figures.[55]

According to Pan Ku, the marriage treaty system had failed because the payment was too small compared to what the Hsiung-nu could obtain from border raiding.[56] However, as early as 3 B.C. the Han court already felt that the *shan-yü*'s homage trips created a heavy drain on the treasury, and some court officials even argued against it on purely economic grounds.[57] The evidence therefore shows conclusively that the triburary sysrem was considered politically so superior to the marriage alliance thar Han was willing to pay a higher price for ir. The Han court insisted on defining the tributary

54 For this incident, see Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 211f. 55 *HS* 94A, p. 3780.
56 See Pan Ku's appreciation at the end of *HS* 94B, p. 3833. 57 *HS* 94B, p. 3812.

system in terms of the three basic elements, homage, hostages, and tribute. The relations between Chih-chih, rival *shan-yü* to Hu-han-yeh, and the Han court may be taken as an illustration of this. When Chih-chih learned of his brother's submission to China, he also sent a son to the Han court as a hostage in 53 B.C. Then twice, in 51 and 50, respectively, Chih-chih dispatched envoys to present tribute to the Chinese throne in the hope of competing with Hu-han-yeh for a favorable peace settlement. But having failed to fulfill the most important of the three tributary obligations, that of homage, Chih-chih was never admitted to the tributary system.

Under the tributary system, the Hsiung-nu still maintained an independent state in every sense of the word, with full territorial integrity. As during the period of the marriage alliances, the Great Wall continued to serve as the line of demarcation between Han and Hsiung-nu. For instance, in 8 B.C. Han asked for a strip of valuable Hsiung-nu land that stretched into the Han frontier commandery of Chang-i. But the *shan-yü* flatly turned down the request, saying that it had been their territory for many generations and that by the original agreement between Hsüan-ti and *shan-yü* Hu-han-yeh, all the lands north of the Great Wall belonged to the Hsiung-nu.[58] But in other respects the tributary relationship differed markedly from relations under the marriage alliance. For example, the Hsiung-nu empire was no longer a "brotherly" state of equal status, but an outer vassal of Han.

The decline in the political status of the Hsiung-nu under the tributary system was also reflected in the refusal of Han to enter into another marriage alliance. In 33 B.C. Hu-han-yeh took the opportunity of this homage trip to ask to be allowed to become an imperial son-in-law. But instead of honoring the *shan-yü* with a woman who was at least allegedly a princess, Yüan-ti gave him a court lady-in-waiting named Wang Ch'iang (Chao-chün)—who happens, however, to have been the most famous beauty in Chinese history. Under the tributary system, no Han princess would ever be sent to marry a *shan-yü* again.[59]

Northern and southern Hsiung-nu

During the reign of *shan-yü* Hu-tu-erh-shih (also named Yü, A.D. 18–48), China entered into a period of great political upheaval, which began with

58 *HS* 94B, p. 3810.

59 *HS* 94B, pp. 3803, 3806. For the legend of this match and its place in subsequent Chinese literature, see Arthur Waley, *The life and times of Po Chü-i, 772–846 A.D.* (London, 1949), pp. 12f., 130, 184. For more examples of the despatch of a Chinese princess to wed leaders of other Asiatic peoples, see A. F. P. Hulsewé, *China in Central Asia: The early stage 125 B.C.–A.D. 23* (Leiden, 1979), pp. 43f., 146f.

the downfall of Wang Mang's Hsin dynasty and ended in the restoration of the Han dynasty under Kuang-wu-ti. The Hsiung-nu took the opportunity to regain control over the Western Regions, as well as other neighboring peoples, especially the Wu-huan.[60] Needless to say, tributary relations between China and the Hsiung-nu were also discontinued. In A.D. 24, the Keng-shih emperor (r. A.D. 23–25) asked the Hsiung-nu to resume relations with the Han under the tributary system. The *shan-yü* Hu-tu-erh-shih replied, saying:[61]

The Hsiung-nu and the Han had originally been brothers. During an intermediate period, the Hsiung-nu experienced internal disorders, and when Hsüan-ti helped to establish the *shan-yü* Hu-han-yeh, he, out of respect for Han, submitted himself as a vassal. Han has now, for its part, been subject to trouble, suffering usurpation by Wang Mang. The Hsiung-nu, in their turn, sent forces to attack Wang Mang, and the border lands were evacuated. As a result, in the prevailing disorder, the world turned in loyalty to Han, and when Wang Mang was in the end defeated, Han was restored, thanks partly to our efforts. It is therefore fitting that you in your turn should show respect to us.

Hu-tu-erh-shih was very serious about reversing the tributary system. In A.D. 25 he declared Lu Fang a Han emperor, the latter being a frontier magnate who falsely claimed that he was a descendant of Wu-ti.[62] The *shan-yü*'s reason for doing this was that when a Han imperial descendant came to submit to the Hsiung-nu, he should be treated in the same manner as Hu-han-yeh. At the height of his power, Hu-tu-erh-shih even compared himself to his illustrious ancestor Mao-tun, a comparison that was justifiable on several grounds. First, in the early years of the Later Han dynasty, Kuang-wu-ti's policy toward the Hsiung-nu was one of appeasement. He "used humble language and lavish gifts to entertain envoys from the Hsiung-nu." Second, the Hsiung-nu made numerous inroads into Han China; and third, Hu-tu-erh-shih found powerful allies among Chinese local leaders on the northern border, such as Lu Fang and P'eng Ch'ung. In this way the relations between the Han court and the Hsiung-nu did suggest the pattern of Mao-tun's days.

But the resemblance was more apparent than real. Owing largely to a growing regionalism among the Hsiung-nu, Hu-tu-erh-shih was never able to establish an authority as unquestioned as had been that of Mao-tun. For example, when Hu-tu-erh-shih designated his son as the heir apparent in contravention of the principle of fraternal succession enunciated by the late Hu-han-yeh, a nephew named Pi, the Jih-chu king of the right, was so

60 For the Wu-huan, see pp. 436f. below. 61 *HS* 94B, p. 3829.

62 *HHS* 12, pp. 505f.; *HHS* 89, pp. 2940f. And see Hans Bielenstein, *The restoration of the Han dynasty*, Vol. III, *BMFEA*, 39 (1967), pp. 102f.

infuriated that he refused to attend the annual meeting at the *shan-yü*'s court. As the eldest son of the preceding *shan-yü*, Pi undoubtedly had a legitimate claim to the succession.[63] But more significantly, as the Jih-chu king of the right, Pi had established a solid power base in the southern part of the Hsiung-nu empire. Thus, in A.D. 48, two years after Hu-tu-erh-shih's son P'u-nu ascended the *shan-yü* throne, eight Hsiung-nu tribes in the south with a military force totaling 40,000 to 50,000 men acclaimed Pi as their own *shan-yü*.[64] Once again, the Hsiung-nu were was split into two groups, which throughout the Later Han period were called the southern Hsiung-nu and the northern Hsiung-nu, respectively.

Hard pressed by the northern Hsiung-nu on the one hand and plagued by widespread natural calamities such as famine and epidemics on the other, the *shan-yü* Pi decided to follow the example of his grandfather Hu-han-yeh and brought the southern Hsiung-nu into the Han tributary system in A.D. 50. In order to fulfill his new obligations, the *shan-yü* not only sent a hostage prince to the Han court, but also showed his submissiveness by prostrating himself before the Han envoy to receive the imperial edict. Needless to say, the southern Hsiung-nu were well paid for this submission. In addition to being honored with an official seal of gold and other insignia, the *shan-yü* received from the Han court 10,000 bales of silken fabrics, 2,500 kilograms of silk, 500 kiloliters of rice, and 36,000 head of cattle.[65]

Later Han and the southern Hsiung-nu

The Chinese tributary system as applied to the southern Hsiung-nu during the Later Han period underwent several significant changes. In the first place, the tributary relations became much more rigidly regularized. On the Hsiung-nu side, the political status of the *shan-yü* was now clearly that of a vassal (*ch'en*). He was required to send tribute bearers together with a hostage prince to the Han court at the end of each year. At the same time, the emperor would dispatch an imperial messenger (*yeh-che*) to escort the previous hostage prince back to the *shan-yü*'s court. These tributary trips took place so regularly that the old and new Hsiung-nu hostage princes reportedly always met along the road on their way to and from China. Probably this system of rotating hostages was designed by the Han court with a view to extending Chinese influence to all future Hsiung-nu leaders.

For Han both imperial gifts to various individuals of the Hsiung-nu

63 See Tezuka Takayoshi, "Nitchiku ō Hi no dokuritsu to minami Kyōdo no Zen'u keishō ni tsuite," *Shien*, 25:2 (1964), 1–12. 64 *HHS* 89, pp. 2942f.

65 *HHS* 89, p. 2943. It may be noted that the term used for seal, *hsi*, was reserved for those that were legitimately held by Han emperors and some kings.

ruling class and financial aid for the southern Hsiung-nu as a whole were also regularized on a yearly basis. For instance, the total amount of silken fabrics for the Hsiung-nu envoys was fixed at 1,000 bales and for the Hsiung-nu nobility at 10,000. According to the memorial of a Chinese court official dated A.D. 91, the annual provisions for the southern Hsiung-nu amounted to 100,900,000 cash in value.[66]

In the second place, the tributary system was considerably tightened to keep the southern Hsiung-nu under Han supervision. In 50 a new office was created to manage Hsiung-nu affairs, that of the (*Shih Hsiung-nu chung-lang chiang* (leader of the gentlemen of the household in charge of the Hsiung-nu).[67] The official duties included specifically participation in judicial decisions on legal disputes among the Hsiung-nu people, as well as the monitoring of their activities and movements. These duties required that the official should accompany the *shan-yü* wherever he went, and thus marked a radical departure from the practice observed in the time of *shan-yü* Hu-han-yeh, who enjoyed virtually complete political autonomy.

In the third place, the Later Han court made conscious efforts to bring the tributary system more strictly in line with the entire imperial system by taking the southern Hsiung-nu into the empire and resettling them in eight frontier commanderies (in modern Shansi, Kansu, and Inner Mongolia). In the winter of A.D. 50, an imperial edict was issued ordering the *shan-yü* of the southern Hsiung-nu to establish his court in the Mei-chi district of Hsi-ho commandery (Shansi). At the same time, in the name of "protection," the headquarters of the imperial directorate of the Hsiung-nu, supported by two thousand cavalry and a work force of five hundred convicts under amnesty, were set up in the same district. Moreover, the Han government also forced large numbers of Chinese to migrate to these frontier commanderies, where mixed settlements of Hsiung-nu and Han Chinese began to appear.[68]

With these important changes, the relations between China and the Hsiung-nu under the Later Han entered into an entirely new stage. Economically, the southern Hsiung-nu relied almost totally on Han assistance. As the *shan-yü* said in a memorial to the Han throne in A.D. 88:[69]

> In the past forty years, your subjects have been born and reared in Han territory and have depended entirely on [China] for food. Each year we received both regular and occasional gifts which can be counted only by the hundreds of millions.

66 Quantities of tribute were fixed in A.D. 50; *HHS* 89, p. 2944. The memorialist of 91 was Yüan An; *HHS* 45, p. 1521. 67 *HHS* 1B, p. 78; *HHS* (tr.) 28, p. 3626.

68 *HHS* 89, pp. 2943f. For convicts under amnesty (*ch'ih-hsing*) and their incorporation into the armed forces, see A. F. P. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han law* (Leiden, 1955), pp. 240f.; and Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, pp. 79, 150 note 24. 69 *HHS* 89, p. 2952.

Politically, Han control over the southern Hsiung-nu reached an unprecedented level. In 143, for instance, the Han court was even able to put a Hsiung-nu prince then residing in the Chinese capital on the *shan-yü* throne after it had been vacant for three years as a result of rebellion.[70] In religious terms, since his participation in the Han tributary system began in 50, the *shan-yü* had made sacrificial offerings to the deceased Han emperors three times a year when he performed the seasonal sacrifices to the "heavenly gods" of the Hsiung-nu.[71]

There can be no doubt that after they moved into Han territory, the southern Hsiung-nu had developed numerous intimate ties with the Han empire. In a sense it is indeed legitimate to view the history of the southern Hsiung-nu as an integral part of that of Later Han China. But this is far from suggesting that the southern Hsiung-nu had already been "absorbed" into Chinese civilization. In fact, Han relations with the southern Hsiung-nu were never totally smooth; friction and even armed clashes occurred from time to time. The *shan-yü* was particularly resentful of the various Han influences produced by governmental supervision as well as mixed settlements, which in the long run sapped much of the vitality of the Hsiung-nu as a nomad people. Thus, in 94 *shan-yü* An-kuo reportedly was drawn toward newly subjugated Hsiung-nu from the north, and at the same time alienated himself from the old groups that had become too well settled in China. In the end he joined forces with the northern warriors and started a large-scale rebellion against the Han.[72]

It is also important to point out that, contrary to the expectations of the Han court, Chinese settlers on the frontiers did not always help the government to maintain law and order in the racially mixed frontier society. Instead, they sometimes collaborated with the Hsiung-nu against Han interests. For example, in A.D. 109, a frontier Chinese adviser at the Hsiung-nu court named Han Tsung followed the *shan-yü* to the Han capital during the latter's homage trip. After returning to the frontier, Han Tsung told the *shan-yü* that the time was now ripe to attack Han because he had found out during their stay in Lo-yang that there had been great floods in interior China and many people had died from starvation. The *shan-yü* took his advice and rebelled.[73]

As this instance clearly indicates, a complicated and often dangerous racial situation had developed on the northern frontiers after the Later Han court adopted the policy of settling the Hsiung-nu inside the empire. The

70 *HHS* 89, pp. 2962f. 71 *HHS* 89, p. 2944.

72 *HHS* 89, p. 2955. For the problem of different affiliations of original tribesmen and those who had newly surrendered, see Tezuka Takayoshi, "Minami Kyōdo no 'koko' to 'shinkō' to ni tsuite," *Shien*, 27:1 (1966), 1–10. 73 *HHS* 89, p. 2957.

grave consequences of this policy were not fully apprehended by the Chinese government until, toward the end of the third century, barbarian unrest reached alarming proportions along the whole of the Western Chin frontier. It may be further noted that when the descendants of the southern Hsiung-nu rose in arms in 304 under the able leadership of the sinicized Liu Yüan, they were joined by a large number of frontier Chinese.[74] After the fall of the Western Chin in A.D. 317, the southern Hsiung-nu succeeded in establishing the first alien dynasty in Chinese history.

The policy of divide and rule

From the very beginning, the Later Han court was determined to prevent the northern Hsiung-nu from becoming reunited with the southern Hsiung-nu. In order to carry out this policy of divide and rule, the Han government persistently and deliberately treated the two Hsiung-nu groups along different lines. While the southern Hsiung-nu, as has been shown above, were embraced by a rigid version of the tributary system, the northern Hsiung-nu were kept out of the system altogether. Han China recognized only the southern *shan-yü* as the legitimate successor of Hu-han-yeh. Throughout the Later Han period, the northern Hsiung-nu were dealt with as a de facto military and economic force rather than a de jure political entity.

And for their part, the northern Hsiung-nu under the leadership of *shan-yü* P'u-nu were relatively defiant and unbending toward China. Unlike their southern brothers, they were not prepared to join the Han tributary system even in the years in which they experienced their greatest difficulties. Heavy losses of manpower due to several years of famine and epidemics forced P'u-nu to seek peace from the Han court as early as A.D. 46. Later, after the southern Hsiung-nu's tributary submission to China, P'u-nu made no less than three unsuccessful attempts to reestablish peaceful relations with the Chinese empire (in 51, 52, and 55). On all these occasions, the request was for a settlement under the terms of a marriage alliance. In 52 the request was placed before officials for their comments, and a long memorial on the subject of foreign relations was submitted by Pan Piao, one of the compilers of the *Han shu*.[75]

The peace move of A.D. 52 is particularly illustrative of the attitude of the northern Hsiung-nu. On this occasion, P'u-nu sent envoys to the Han court, with horses and furs as tribute, requesting a marriage between their

74 For Liu Yüan, see *CS* 101, p. 2649; and *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien* 85, p. 2702, based on a source that is now lost, which claims that both Chinese (Chin), and Hsiung-nu (Hu), rallied to Liu Yüan's side.
75 *HHS* 89, pp. 2942, 2945–46, 2948.

two houses. At the same time the *shan-yü* also indicated his desire to obtain new Chinese musical instruments and sought permission to bring representatives from states in the Western Regions to China.

Throughout the Later Han period, relations between the northern Hsiung-nu and Han generally alternated between trade and war. Evidence shows that the northern Hsiung-nu were probably more interested in establishing trading relations with Han than in concluding a lasting peace to settle all the political differences. Two kinds of trade may be distinguished: official trade in the form of the exchange of imperial gifts for tribute; and private trade between the two peoples along the border. The northern Hsiung-nu tribute of A.D. 52, for instance, was reciprocated with imperial gifts of approximately equal value. Similar exchanges also reportedly took place in 55 and 104.[76]

Large-scale private trade on the frontiers was even more basic to the northern Hsiung-nu economy. In the early decades of the Later Han dynasty, northern Hsiung-nu repeatedly brought cattle and horses great distances to border markets to trade with frontier Chinese. In A.D. 63 they made several attacks along the border, forcing the Han court to open border markets to them. In 84, the Han governor of Wu-wei reported that the Hsiung-nu wished to reopen trade. This time the *shan-yü* sent several princes and nobles to lead the caravan, which brought more than ten thousand head of cattle and horses to trade with Chinese merchants. The Hsiung-nu princes and nobles were well accommodated and generously rewarded with gifts by the Han government while traveling in China.[77] Obviously both sides took the trade to be an event of major importance in the course of their relationship.

In the Later Han dynasty wars broke out periodically with the northern Hsiung-nu, but these were on the whole less frequent and on a much smaller scale than those of the Former Han period. The two major conflicts, which broke out in A.D. 73 and 89, respectively, both ended in the defeat of the northern Hsiung-nu.[78] But the decline of the northern Hsiung-nu in Outer Mongolia and Central Asia probably cannot be attributed entirely to Han military superiority. Two other interrelated developments must also be taken into account. One was a great loss of manpower from the northern Hsiung-nu confederacy as a result of large-scale desertions.

Since the beginning of the eighth decade of the first century A.D., internal power struggles, epidemics, and famine caused many of the constituent peoples of the northern Hsiung-nu confederation to flee their territories. Some submitted to the Han authorities, while others sought protec-

76 *HHS* 89, pp. 2948, 2957. 77 *HHS* 89, pp. 2949–50. 78 *HHS* 89, pp. 2949, 2952.

tion from the southern Hsiung-nu, Wu-huan, Hsien-pi, or Ting-ling. In 83, for instance, several northern Hsiung-nu chieftains came to Wu-yüan on the border to submit, bringing with them 38,000 followers, 20,000 horses, and more than 100,000 head of oxen and sheep. The *Hou Han shu* reports that by the year 85 some seventy groups, led by senior chieftains, had defected from the northern Hsiung-nu to Han. Even more joined the southern Hsiung-nu. Within forty years the total population of the southern Hsiung-nu saw a remarkable increase, from about 50,000 in A.D. 50, to 230,730 in 90. Evidence shows that the increase was not due solely to natural growth, but to the absorption over the years of large numbers of northern Hsiung-nu into the southern group.[79]

Non-Chinese neighbors of the northern Hsiung-nu also took advantage of their internal difficulties to attack them along various fronts. Weakened and with their numbers dwindling, the northern Hsiung-nu were attacked by the southern Hsiung-nu from the south and by the Ting-ling from the north; the Hsien-pi struck at their left flank, invaders from the Western Regions made incursions on their right. Beset on all sides, the northern *shan-yü* was unable to maintain his position and fled to the west.[80] In particular, the northern Hsiung-nu were subject to threats from the rising power of the Hsien-pi confederation, which in A.D. 87 inflicted a great defeat on them, killing the northern *shan-yü* and flaying his body. This catastrophic defeat set off a southward exodus of northern Hsiung-nu; 58 tribes consisting of 200,000 people in all and 8,000 men able to bear arms came to surrender to Han at the four frontier commanderies of Yün-chung, Wu-yüan, Shuo-fang (in the Ordos), and Pei-ti (Ning-hsia). In 91 what remained of the northern Hsiung-nu nation moved farther west to the Ili Valley, and their domination over Outer Mongolia and Central Asia came to an end.[81]

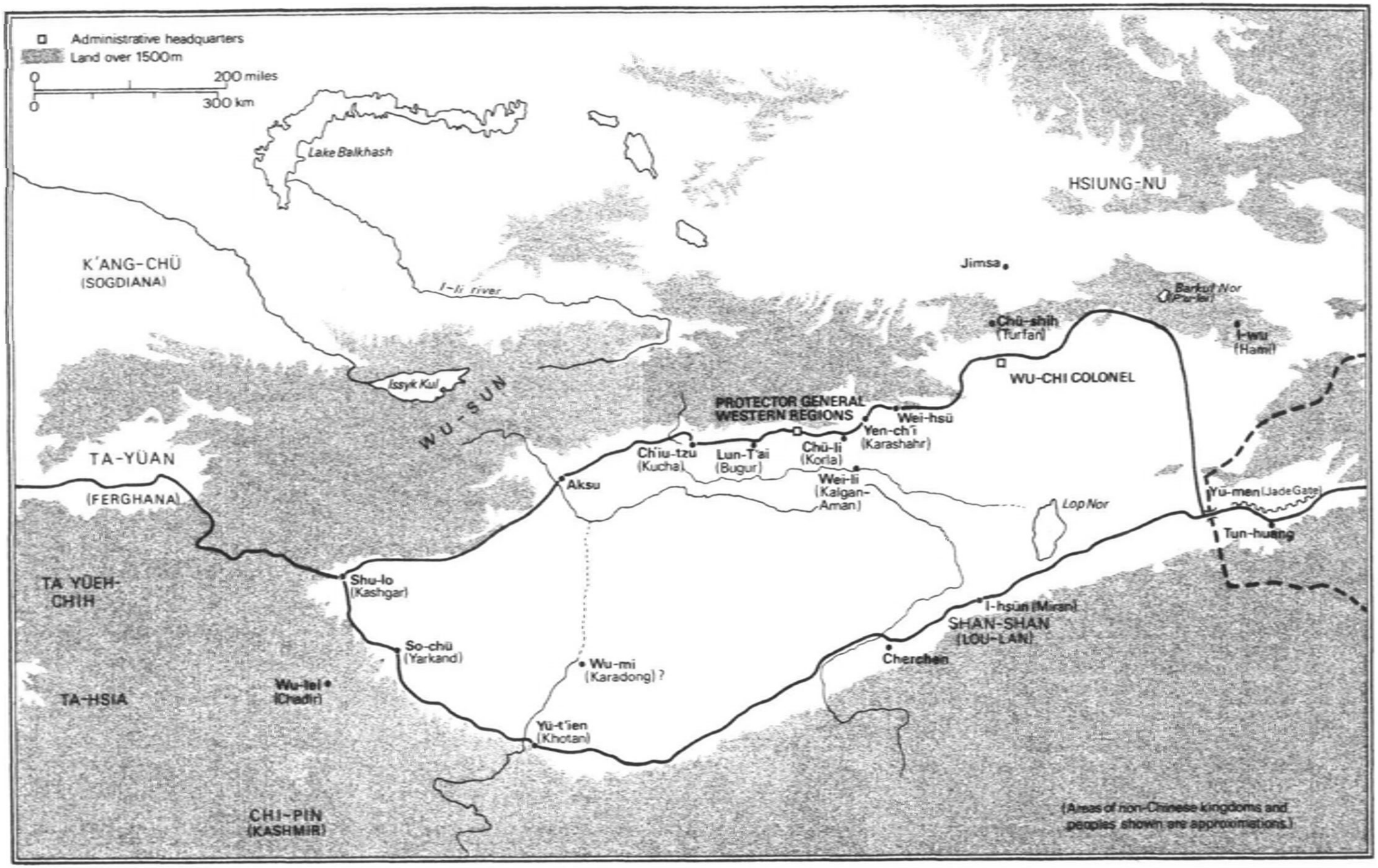
THE WESTERN REGIONS[82]

The expansion of Han China to the Western Regions was a direct result of military confrontations with the Hsiung-nu. In 177 B.C. the Hsiung-nu,

79 See Ma, *Pei-Ti yü Hsiung-nu*, p. 37; Tezuka, "Minami Kyōdo no 'koko' to 'shinkō' to ni tsuite," pp. 3–5. 80 *HHS* 89, p. 2950.

81 *HHS* 89, p. 2951. For the westward migration of the northern Hsiung-nu, see Ch'i Ssu-ho, "Hsiung-nu hsi-ch'ien chi ch'i tsai Ou-chou ti huo-tung," *LSYC*, 1977.3, 126–41; and Hsiao Chih-hsing, "Kuan-yü Hsiung-nu hsi-ch'ien kuo-ch'eng ti t'an-t'ao," *LSYC*, 1978.7, 83–87.

82 Han relations with the states of the Western Regions are treated in several chapters of the *Shih-chi* and the *Han shu*, and the question has been raised of which version should be regarded as preferable. For the suggestion that the *Shih-chi*'s account is a secondary record, being compiled on the basis of the *Han shu*, see A. F. P. Hulsewé, "The problem of the authenticity of *Shih-chi* ch. 123, the memoir on Ta Yüan," *TP*, 61:1–3 (1975), 83–147; Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 10f.; and Yves Hervouet, "La valeur relative des textes du *Che ki* et du *Han chou*," in *Mélanges de Sinologie offerts à Monsieur Paul Demiéville* (Paris, 1974), Vol. II, pp. 55–76.



Map 16. The Western Regions and the Silk Roads

having succeeded in forcing the Yüeh-chih of the Chang-i area (Kansu) into complete submission, overcame most of the small states in the Western Regions from Lou-lan (renamed Shan-shan after 77 B.C.; west of Lop Nor; Cherchen) to Wu-sun (in the Ili Valley north of the Tarim Basin). From that time the Hsiung-nu were able to draw on the vast natural and human resources of the Western Regions. This area achieved such importance for the steppe empire that it came to be called the "right arm" of the Hsiung-nu. It was the decision of the Han court to cut off this "right arm" that sent Chang Ch'ien to the far west in 138 B.C. with a delegation of over one hundred members, including a Hsiung-nu who had surrendered and agreed to serve as his guide.[83]

As the first Han envoy to the west, the immediate objective of Chang Ch'ien's mission was to seek a military alliance with the Greater Yüeh-chih, who had suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Hsiung-nu in the early years of Mao-tun's reign. However, when Chang Ch'ien and his party eventually arrived in the Yüeh-chih territory, after being captured by the Hsiung-nu and detained by them for ten years, they were disappointed to find that the Yüeh-chih were too well settled to want a war of retaliation against the Hsiung-nu. Of the entire delegation, only two members survived the mission, returning to Ch'ang-an in about the year 126 B.C.[84] Chang Ch'ien's failure turned out, however, to be the beginning of Han China's success in its subsequent western expansion. It was largely owing to the information about the Western Regions brought back by Chang Ch'ien that the Han court later decided to make its first diplomatic overtures toward some of the small states in that area.

Access to the Western Regions: Chang Ch'ien's initiative

In 121 B.C. the Hun-yeh king of the Hsiung-nu surrendered to Han. Later, the court ordered that he and the 40,000 tribesmen that he led should be moved from their military base in the Ho-hsi area to the northern border.[85] With the Ho-hsi area vacated by the Hsiung-nu, Han for the first time gained direct access to the Western Regions. Chang Ch'ien therefore seized the opportunity to memorialize the throne, proposing the establishment of official relations with the western states. He says:[86]

83 *SC* 123, p. 3168 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, pp. 271f.); *HS* 61, pp. 2691f. (Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 213f.).

84 For the uncertainty regarding the dates of Chang Ch'ien's journeys, see Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 209 note 774.

85 *HS* 6, p. 176 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 62); *HS* 61, p. 2691 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 213); *HS* 96A, p. 3873 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 75).

86 *SC* 123, p. 3168 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, p. 272). For a slightly different version, see *HS* 61, p. 2692 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 217).

Now the *shan-yü* is suffering from the recent blow delivered by our armies, and the region formerly occupied by the Hun-yeh king and his people is deserted . . . If we could make use of this opportunity to send rich gifts and bribes to the Wu-sun people and persuade them to move farther east and occupy the region which formerly belonged to the Hun-yeh king, then the Han could conclude an alliance of brotherhood with them and, under the circumstances, they would surely do as we say. If we could get them to obey us, it would be like cutting off the right arm of the Hsiung-nu. Then, once we had established an alliance with the Wu-sun, Ta-hsia [Bactria] and the other countries to the west could all be persuaded to come to court and acknowledge themselves our foreign vassals.

The court approved this proposal and Chang Ch'ien was again sent to the Western Regions, with a party of three hundred members (probably in 115 B.C. or slightly earlier). Knowing that peoples in the Western Regions were generally greedy for Han wealth and goods, the party took along tens of thousands of cattle and sheep and large quantities of gold and silk goods as gifts from the emperor to leaders of the western states. Chang failed to persuade the Wu-sun people to move to the east because of strong opposition from the Wu-sun aristocracy, but his mission was nevertheless successful in establishing initial contacts with states such as Wu-sun, Ta-yüan (Ferghana), K'ang-chü (Sogdiana), Ta-hsia (Bactria), and Yü-t'ien (Khotan). Many of these became so interested in the new ties that they returned the Han courtesy by sending envoys to China. Thus began Han expansion into the Western Regions.[87]

The half-century between Chang Ch'ien's second mission and the establishment of the office of protector-general of the Western Regions (*hsi-yü tu-hu*)[88] in 60 B.C. witnessed intense struggles between Han and the Hsiung-nu for domination of the Western Regions. The Western Regions had long been within the Hsiung-nu sphere of influence, and this understandably placed Han at a disadvantage. To wrest the area from the Hsiung-nu, Han found it necessary to resort to a variety of tactics.

The choice of Wu-sun as the first target of diplomatic maneuvers was well-considered. Wu-sun, with a population of 630,000 and 188,000 men able to bear arms, was the most populous as well as militarily the most powerful of all the Hsiung-nu allies in the Western Regions.[89] The Wu-sun were initially dazzled by Han gold and silk, but the Han leadership soon discovered that wealth alone was not enough to win Wu-sun's alle-

87 *HS* 61, p. 2696 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 223f.).

88 For the establishment of this post, see Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 64. For its history, see Hans Bielenstein, *The bureaucracy of Han times* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 110f.

89 For these figures, see *HS* 96B, p. 3901 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 143). Statistics of this type, given in catalog form for the states of the west (*HS* 96A–96B) were probably based on reports submitted by the protector-general and his subordinate officers. They therefore refer in all probability to a time after 60 B.C., and not to the time when these plans were being made by the Han court.

giance. Between 110 and 105 B.C., the court decided to send a Han "princess" to marry the aged ruler of the Wu-sun, the *k'un-mo*.[90] In return, Wu-sun presented a thousand horses to the emperor as a "betrothal gift." Such use of marriage as a political tool was a tactic adapted from the earlier system of marriage treaties with the Hsiung-nu, and the Hsiung-nu *shan-yü* quickly saw the significance of the move. He too sent a daughter to marry the *k'un-mo*. The Wu-sun ruler made the Han princess the bride of the right, and the Hsiung-nu princess the bride of the left. However, according to Hsiung-nu custom the place of honor was on the left side; Han probably lost ground in this diplomatic encounter.[91]

The Han court and the Hsiung-nu also competed in their demands for and treatment of hostages. The case of Lou-lan may be taken as an example. Sandwiched between the two great powers, in 108 B.C. Lou-lan had to send one hostage prince to Han and another to the Hsiung-nu. The same story repeated itself when a new king succeeded to the throne in 92 B.C. Although the institution of hostages was of Chinese origin, the Hsiung-nu had by now become thoroughly familiar with the game. So, a few years later, when the *shan-yü* learned about the death of the new king before the Han court, he rushed the hostage prince back to Lou-lan and manipulated the succession in the Hsiung-nu favor.[92] This coup brought about a fundamental shift in Lou-lan's foreign policy to a strong anti-Han line, which was maintained until the Han officer Fu Chieh-tzu succeeded in assassinating the king who favored the Hsiung-nu cause in 77 B.C.

Military conquest

The truly decisive victories in the Han struggle for hegemony over the Western Regions were gained on the battlefield. The Han empire began its military campaigns in the Western Regions in 108 B.C., with an attack on Lou-lan (Cherchen) and Chü-shih (Turfan). Lou-lan, a small state with a population later recorded as 14,100, lay beyond the western threshold of Han China. It was the first major way station on the Silk Road after leaving Tun-huang, and it was the key to Han expansion into Central Asia. On the other hand, Turfan, which dominated the Turfan depression, was, so to speak, the Hsiung-nu southern gate into the Western Regions. It also blocked Han penetration into Wu-sun in the Ili Valley and Ta-yüan (Fer-

90 *K'un-mo* (also *k'un-mi*), like *shan-yü*, is a Chinese transcription of the Wu-sun's title for their leader; Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 43–44.

91 *HS* 96B, pp. 3902f. (Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 145f.).

92 *HS* 96A, p. 3877 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 87–88). For hostages, see Lien-sheng Yang, "Hostages in Chinese history."

ghana) farther west, between the upper reaches of the Syr Darya and Amu Darya. It was to secure these two strategic points that the commander Chao P'o-nu was sent by the Han court to attack Cherchen and Turfan. Having succeeded in forcing Cherchen's submission and inflicting a major defeat on Turfan, Han for the first time made its military strength felt in the Western Regions. It is hardly surprising that three years later, in 105 B.C., the king of Wu-sun asked for the hand of a Han princess.[93]

The second major military victory which helped to establish Han domination over the Western Regions was the conquest of Ferghana in 101 B.C. by the Han general Li Kuang-li.[94] Ferghana was very far from the Han empire,[95] and the campaign involved numerous logistical difficulties for the Chinese army. However, it was determined to take the risk in order to obtain the fabled horses of the region and to demonstrate Han military strength. If Han could subdue a state as far off as Ferghana, then all the states in the Western Regions would be at the mercy of China. After learning about the Han move, the Hsiung-nu made an attempt to intercept Li Kuang-li, but were outnumbered by his forces and failed to check his advance. The campaign, which lasted four years, was clearly the most expensive to be mounted in the entire history of the dynasty, involving two expeditionary forces: Li Kuang-li was unable to achieve his goals until he had returned to Tun-huang to request reinforcements. As the *Han shu* says: "After the Erh-shih general conquered Ta-yüan, all the states of the Western Regions were shocked and frightened."[96] Most sent envoys to present tribute to Han.

Throughout the Han period, Turfan, owing to its proximity to the Hsiung-nu, proved to be the most intractable of the western states. Though Han and the Hsiung-nu waged a see-saw conflict over Turfan, that state's formal submission to Han in 90 B.C. marks the beginning of Chinese control of this key area. In that year Han was engaged in a major war with the Hsiung-nu. To prevent Turfan from allying with the *shan-yü*, the general Ch'eng Wan, marquis of K'ai-ling and a former Hsiung-nu king

93 *HS* 96A, p. 3875; *HS* 96B, p. 3903 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 81f., 147).

94 Li had been given an ad hoc appointment as Erh-shih general (*Erh-shih chiang-chün*), Erh-shih being the Chinese transcription of the name of a city in Ferghana; Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 76.

95 *HS* 96A, p. 3894 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 131). Different editions of the *Han shu* give figures that convert to either 5,070 or 5,200 km from Ch'ang-an; i.e., twice the estimate given in *HS* for the distance from Cherchen to the Han capital. These figures represent the conversion into modern measure of contemporaty descriptions of distances given in Chinese *li* (approx. 0.4 km). The measurements given by such sources may at times be only vety general indications of the actual distances involved, especially as they refer to areas more and more remote from the organs of Chinese administration; in this context, however, as they represent the mileage of official courier routes that were quite heavily used by the protector-general's office, these figures should not be too hastily dismissed: see Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 30–31.

96 *HS* 96A, p. 3873 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 76).

who had submitted to Han, led the troops of six western states, including Cherchen, Wei-li (Kalgan-aman), and Wei-hsü (east of Karashahr) to attack Turfan, forcing it to submit.[97] The Hsiung-nu later succeeded in briefly regaining their lost ground in Turfan, but the period of their domination of the Western Regions was nearing its end. In 72–71 B.C. a coalition of Han, Wu-sun, Ting-ling, and Wu-huan forces inflicted a series of major defeats on the Hsiung-nu. From this time on, Hsiung-nu control slipped rapidly. When Han reconquered Turfan in 67 B.C., it began to establish agricultural garrisons in the fertile lands of that state.

Administrative arrangements

The establishment of the office of protector-general of the Western Regions in 60 or 59 B.C. marks the start of a new phase in which Han influence became markedly more effective. From a very early date the Hsiung-nu had ruled the various western states through an office known as commandant in charge of slaves (*t'ung-p'u tu-wei*), under the jurisdiction of the Jih-chu king.[98] This office had been given the power to collect taxes, as well as the authority to conscript corvée labor. With the surrender of the Jih-chu king to the Han officer Cheng Chi in 60 B.C., this Hsiung-nu office was abolished. At the same time, the Han office of protector-general was created in its place, and Cheng Chi was appointed the first Han protector-general.[99] The office of protector-general was the Han military headquarters in the Western Regions, and it also possessed general political authority to maintain Han control over the area and regulate relations among the western states themselves.

The headquarters of the Han protector-general was located near to, if not on, the very site of the Hsiung-nu commandant's headquarters. The latter is reported to have been situated somewhere close to the three states of Yen-ch'i (Karashahr), Wei-hsü (east of Karashahr), and Wei-li (Kalgan-aman), while the former was set up in the city of Wu-lei (Chadir). Chadir was some 125 kilometers (85 miles) east of Kalgan-aman, 205 kilometers (150 miles) east of Wei-hsü, and 165 kilometers (110 miles) northeast of Karashahr.[100] It is quite reasonable to assume that Han simply took over the Hsiung-nu commandant's office and transformed it into that of the protector-general.

97 *HS* 96B, pp. 3913, 3922 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 168, 184).

98 On the *t'ung-p'u tu-wei*, see *HS* 96A, p. 3872; and see also the discussions of Chang Wei-hua, *Lun Han Wu-ti* (Shanghai, 1957), p. 166.

99 *HS* 96A, pp. 3872, 3874 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 73, 78).

100 For distances between the Han headquarters in Kalgan-aman and the other three states, see *HS* 96B, pp. 3917–18.

In 48 B.C. an additional office, that of the wu-chi colonel (*wu-chi hsiao-wei*), was established at Turfan.[101] Though the title suggests a post of a military nature, the duties of the office revolved mainly around financial and logistical matters, especially those related to the management of the agricultural garrisons (*t'un-t'ien*), and the general provisioning of food and services for Han forces. At an earlier date, there had been a post of colonel of agricultural garrisons (*t'un-t'ien hsiao-wei*) attached to the protector-general. The office of the wu-chi colonel was in all likelihood a reorganization of that of the colonel of agricultural garrisons, with expanded functions. Apart from their regular responsibility for the supervision of the agricultural garrisons, we find wu-chi colonels engaged in a number of other activities: a colonel by the name of Hsü P'u took charge of road construction around A.D. 3; another named Tiao Hu arrested, in A.D. 10, the king of a Turfan statelet (in Jimsa) who had refused to provide a Chinese diplomatic mission to the Western Regions with the required supplies of food and service; and a third such officer, Kuo Ch'in, led an army to attack Karashahr in A.D. 16.

The cost of maintaining the Han hold in these parts had involved further work and continual expense to the east, where it had become necessary to extend the earthworks and watchtowers far beyond the limits of the defenses built in the time of the First Ch'in emperor. The new line of communications led westward as far as Tun-huang. At the same time a supplementary branch was built in a northerly direction, at right angles to the main line, to take advantage of the water supplies of the Edsen gol at Chü-yen, and set up agricultural garrisons there. These were intended to supply the conscript troops stationed on the main east-to-west line. Fragments of the written records made by these forces testify to their professional standards and give some idea of the extent of the supplies needed for maintenance of the garrison. (See Chapter 7 below, pp. 482f. and Chapter 9 below, p. 538).

Relations during the first century A.D.

With the completion of the administrative network, Han finally succeeded in bringing the Western Regions into the tributary system. The operation

101 *HS* 96A, p. 3874 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 79). For these offices see Lao Kan, "Han-tai ti Hsi-yü tu-hu yü wu-chi hsiao-wei," *CYYY*, 28:1 (1956), 485–96; Kubo Yasuhiko, "Boki kōi setchi no mokuteki ni tsuite," *Shien*, 26:2–3 (1966), 55–66; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 228f.; and Chapter 2 above, p. 211 note 200. Bielenstein (*Bureaucracy*, p. 10) notes that the office could be held by two men, who should be called the "wu colonel" and the "chi colonel," respectively; the texts, however, almost always refer to both incumbents as "wu and chi colonel." When Later Han reconstituted the office, however, a single officer called the "wu colonel" was appointed; see p. 415 below.

of the system is well summed up by Fan Yeh, compiler of the *Hou-Han shu*, as follows:[102]

Records of the customs and lands of the Western Regions were unheard of in ancient times. During the Han period, however, Chang Ch'ien . . . and Pan Ch'ao . . . eventually succeeded in carrying out expansion to the far west and in bringing foreign territories into submission. Overawed by military strength and attracted by wealth, none [of the rulers of the states in the Western Regions] did not present strange local products as tribute and his beloved sons as hostages. They bared their heads and kneeled down toward the east to pay homage to the Son of Heaven. Thereupon, the offices of *wu-chi* [*hsiao-wei*] were instituted separately to take care of their affairs and the command of the protector-general was established to exercise general authority. Those who were submissive from the very beginning received money and official seals as imperial gifts, but those who surrendered later were taken to the capital to receive punishment. Agricultural garrisons were set up in fertile fields and post stations built along the main highways. Messengers and interpreters travelled without cessation, and barbarian merchants and peddlers came to the border [for trade] everyday.

In spite of the somewhat excessive sinocentrism of the author's language, this characterization has the merit of bringing out the basic features of the relations between the Han empire and the western states, particularly during the Former Han period. (Analysis of Fan Yeh's statement follows below; see pp. 416f.).

At the beginning of the Later Han dynasty, partly because of his preoccupation with internal affairs of China and partly because of the tremendous costs involved, Kuang-wu-ti resisted the temptation of resuming tributary relations with the Western Regions. He rejected the request of some of the states to reestablish the office of protector-general, the nerve center of the Han tributary system. The northern Hsiung-nu were thus able to reassert control over this area, and they maintained such control until the renewal of Chinese intervention in A.D. 73. Heavy exactions were imposed on most of the western states, and with the recovery of this economic and military base the Hsiung-nu again became a serious threat to the security of the northwestern frontiers.

During this period the political map of the Western Regions changed considerably, a succession of local states rising to assert regional hegemony. The first state to become such a dominant force was So-chü (Yarkand). In Former Han times, Yarkand had been just a medium-sized state with a population of 16,373. In the early years of Later Han, a king of Yarkand

102 *HHS* 88, p. 2931 (Yü, *Trade and expansion*, p. 143). For a general discussion of cultural and economic relations between Han and the Western Regions based primarily on recent archeological discoveries, see Wang Ning-sheng, "Han-Chin Hsi-yü yü tsu-kuo wen-ming," *KKHP*, 1977.1, 23–42.

named K'ang distinguished himself by uniting the neighboring states in wars of resistance against the Hsiung-nu. He also offered protection to Chinese officials and men formerly attached to the Han protector-general. These men, together with their families, had been stranded in the Western Regions after the fall of Wang Mang. This pro-Han gesture prompted Kuang-wu-ti to entitle K'ang "great commandant of the Western Regions" (*hsi-yü ta tu-wei*), with full authority over all the other states (A.D. 29).

The appointment was no more than recognition of a de facto situation, but it invested Yarkand with the authority to act as the leading state in the Western Regions. In A.D. 33 K'ang was succeeded by his younger brother Hsien, an able but overly ambitious leader. Within a few years Hsien had succeeded in subjecting to himself almost all the states east of the Pamirs, and in A.D. 41 he sent an envoy to the Han court requesting the title of protector-general of the Western Regions. This was granted, but was changed after a short time to the honorary title of "great general of the Han" (*Han ta chiang-chün*). As a result, he grew increasingly defiant of Han.[103]

In the next two decades, Hsien established a virtually complete domination over the Western Regions, despite attacks by the northern Hsiung-nu. But he had undermined his own position by imposing extremely heavy taxes on the other states in the region. The Chinese refused to become involved, so a coalition of western states including Ch'iu-tzu (Kucha), Khotan, Turfan, Cherchen, and Karashahr turned to the Hsiung-nu for protection. This alliance presented Yarkand with a serious challenge, and in 61 Khotan conquered Yarkand and captured Hsien, ending the long period of his hegemony in the Western Regions. There ensued a brief period of intense intraregional struggle, as Khotan, Cherchen, and Turfan vied for supremacy at the expense of their weaker neighbors.

It was, however, the northern Hsiung-nu who ultimately benefitted from the conflicts among the western states. They moved quickly to establish order and impose levies. Then, having obtained full control of the Western Regions, the Hsiung-nu began to raid the western frontiers of Han. From 63 onward, the entire Ho-hsi area became so unsafe that major frontier cities were forced to keep their gates closed, even during the daytime. Stability and security would not be reestablished in the northwest while the Hsiung-nu controlled the Western Regions.[104]

In the spring of 73, the commander Tou Ku was sent on a punitive expedition against the Hsiung-nu. Proceeding north from Chiu-ch'üan (modern Kansu), Tou Ku inflicted a major defeat on the enemy and chased

103 *HHS* 88, pp. 2915, 2923f. 104 *HHS* 47, p. 1582; *HHS* 88, pp. 2925f.; *HHS* 89, p. 2949.

them as far as Barkul Nor (Lake P'u-lei). On his way back, he ordered the reestablishment of agricultural garrisons in the Hami (I-wu) area. The next year, A.D. 74, Tou again routed the Hsiung-nu and reoccupied Turfan, another area where the creation of military colonies could be of great strategic value. As Fan Yeh rightly observed, Hami was particularly well known for the fertility of its land, whereas Turfan was the Hsiung-nu's main entrance into the Western Regions. "Therefore," in Fan Yeh's words, "Han and the Hsiung-nu always fought over the possession of Hami and Turfan in order to control the Western Regions."[105] The recovery of these two areas made it possible for Han to reestablish the offices of protector-general of the Western regions and wu colonel (*wu hsiao-wei*), with headquarters in Kucha and Turfan, respectively.

Han tributary relations with the Western Regions were again interrupted in 77 by the northern Hsiung-nu and their satellite states, which led to the dispatch of a second Han expedition. In 89 the commander Tou Hsien dealt the Hsiung-nu a serious blow at Ch'i-lo Mountain in Outer Mongolia. According to the Han official report, over 13,000 Hsiung-nu were killed and 81 Hsiung-nu tribes consisting of 200,000 people surrendered to Han. At the same time, Tou Hsien also sent an army of more than 2,000 cavalry to make a surprise attack on the Hsiung-nu base in the Western Regions, capturing Hami, from which the Han garrison had been withdrawn in 77.[106]

This decisive Han victory greatly facilitated the pacification of the Western Regions in 91 by Pan Ch'ao, who had served as a military officer in the area since the beginning of this general offensive in A.D. 73. It was during Pan's tenure as protector-general, from 91 to 101, that Later Han exerted its most secure control over the Western Regions. In 94 more than fifty states sent hostages to Lo-yang with tribute.

Later Han successes

The successes of the Later Han dynasty in the Western Regions were in fact largely the personal achievements of Pan Ch'ao and his son Pan Yung. Yung's long career in the Western Regions began in 107 and culminated in his appointment as chief officer of the Western Regions (*hsi-yü chang-shih*), in 123. It was mainly due to the efforts of Pan Yung that complete control over the entire Turfan depression was established in 126, and the last ties between the Hsiung-nu and Turfan decisively severed. In the following

105 *HHS* 2, p. 120; *HHS* 23, p. 810; *HHS* 88, p. 2914; *HHS* 89, p. 2949.
106 *HHS* 3, p. 135; *HHS* 23, pp. 813f.

year, after his plan to subdue the defiant Yüan-meng, king of Karashahr, had been successfully carried out, all the major powers of the Western Regions, including Kucha, Khotan, and Yarkand, came to submit to Han. The expansion of the agricultural garrisons that was undertaken in Hami in 131 was clearly based on groundwork laid by Pan Yung.[107]

In the summary made by Fan Yeh, which is cited above, attention is drawn to a number of crucial elements in the relations between the Han empire and the states of the Western Regions. First, the exchange of gifts and tribute figured centrally in the arrangements. Each time a Han diplomatic mission was sent to the Western Regions it would carry imperial gifts, normally consisting of gold and silk, to the various states. At other times, such gifts could also be distributed by the protector-general or the wu-chi colonel. In return, the states were expected to send envoys to the Han court to present their "local products" as tribute. Khotan jade, horses from Ferghana, and wine,[108] for example, were all among tributary items of the day.

Tribute from the Western Regions was important to the Han court chiefly as a symbol of political submission, rather than for its intrinsic value. On the other hand, tribute meant little more to the western states than an official cloak for trade. The state of (Kashmir), for example, was never a party to the Han tributary system, but it frequently sent envoys with "tribute" to China. As an official during the reign of Ch'eng-ti (33–7 B.C.) pointed out, the so-called tribute bearers from Kashmir were neither officials nor nobles, but ordinary merchants who came for trade.[109] In the same period another state, Sogdiana (K'ang-chü), also insisted on joining the Han tributary system. According to the report of the protector-general, Sogdiana never showed due respect for Han authority. It was solely for the purpose of trade that this distant state (said to be 12,300 *li*, more than 5,000 kilometers or 3,225 miles, from Ch'ang-an) sought to participate in the system.[110]

Hostages, a standard feature of the tributary system, served as an important political link between Han and the Western Regions. From 108 B.C. till the end of the dynasty in A.D. 220, numerous hostage princes had been sent to the Han court from the tributary states. Like their Hsiung-nu counterparts, hostages from the Western Regions were lodged in the capital. In Han times, the number of foreign hostages together with their own

107 *HHS* 6, pp. 257–58; *HHS* 47, pp. 1571f.; *HHS* 88, p. 2928.

108 For China's discovery of the grape and first experiments in growing vineyards, see *HS* 96A, p. 3895 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 136); *HS* 96B, p. 3928 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 199).

109 See the submission made by Tu Ch'in, *HS* 96A, p. 3886 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 108f.).

110 *HS* 96A, p. 3893 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 127).

followers must have been quite large; the court had to build special residences to accommodate them. In 94 A.D., for instance, special "quarters for the barbarians" (*Man-I ti*) were provided in Lo-yang where people, presumably hostages, from the Western Regions lived.[111] They were generally subject to Chinese law and punishment. Some of them may even have received a Chinese education, as in the case of a king of Yarkand who spent his early years in Ch'ang-an as a hostage prince during the reign of Yüan-ti (49–33 B.C.). He assimilated so much to a Chinese way of life that he introduced some Han institutions into his own state.[112] Since all the hostage princes were potential royal successors, it is probable that the Han court made deliberate efforts to promote pro-Han sentiments among them. Throughout this period, Han consistently sought opportunities to support its hostages in their bids for power in their homes.

Another favorite device used by Han to manipulate the rulers of the tributary states was the bestowal of official titles. As a rule, in each tributary state the ruler would be created a marquis (*hou*), while his chief assistants would be styled chancellors (*hsiang*), generals (*chiang*), or commandants (*tu-wei*). In addition, a few local titles such as *chü-ch'ü* and *tang-hu*[113] could also receive official recognition from the Han court. Once a title was conferred, whether it be Han or local, the recipient would be given an official seal together with credentials.

By the end of Former Han, as many as 376 such titles had been conferred on leaders of the western tributary states. Later Han continued and expanded this practice. Some tributary officials even received regular stipends from the Han government. It should be noted that several Han official seals have recently been discovered in Sinkiang, such as the bronze seal that is probably that of a *tang-hu* and a wooden document (in Kharoṣṭhí script) bearing the impress of a Chinese seal *Shan-shan tu-wei* (commandant of Shan-shan). Although most of the tributary officials were local people, evidence shows that occasionally the Han court also appointed Han Chinese to such posts. Thus, during the reign of Huan-ti (A.D. 146–168), we find a Chinese named Ch'in Mu serving as the master of records (*chu-pu*) of the king of Chü-mi, and another named Liu P'ing-kuo holding the office of general of the left in the state of Kucha.[114]

Han official titles were by no means mere honorary appointments; each title signified a function of some kind. Since, in theory as well as in

111 *HHS* 88, p. 2928. 112 *HHS* 88, p. 2923.

113 For these Hsiung-nu titles, see *HS* 96B, p. 3928 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 197); Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 84 note 81, 197 note 712.

114 Meng Ch'ih, "Tsung Hsin-chiang li-shih wen-wu k'an Han-tai tsai Hsi-yü ti cheng-chih ts'o-shih ho ching-chi chien-she," *WW*, 1975.7, Plate 8 (no. 4), and p. 28. See Ise Sentarō, *Chūgoku sai iki keiei shi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1955), pp. 75–80.

practice, all the officials of the tributary states appointed by Han were under the supervision of the protector-general of the Western Regions, it was the responsibility of the latter to see that the former performed their duties properly. For example, at the request of the protector-general Han Hsüan (48–46 B.C.) a number of Wu-sun officials were given Han seals and credentials as special assistants to their king, the greater *k'un-mi*.[115] Several decades later, however, when they failed to prevent the assassination of the greater *k'un-mi*'s successor, all the seals and credentials were taken away from them (11 B.C.).[116]

The same practice continued well into the Later Han period. Sometime after A.D. 153, when a Han-supported king in the Turfan area proved to be incapable of maintaining order, the wu colonel Yen Hsiang stripped him of his official seal and credentials and gave these to another local leader.[117] It was precisely because the Han official title invested its possessor with some sort of legitimacy and authority that the tributary states continued to cherish it long after the Han dynasty itself had fallen. As late as 383, when Lü Kuang pacified Kucha, many western states came to submit to him, turning in their well-kept Han credentials to show their allegiance to China. Lü therefore memorialized the court of Fu Chien, asking that new ones be issued to them.[118]

The growth of colonies

Finally, as noted by Fan Yeh, agricultural garrisons (*t'un-t'ien*) played a key role in supporting the Han tributary system in the Western Regions. Han began to develop these colonies very early. According to the *Han shu*:[119]

> After the Erh-shih general [Li Kuang-li] conquered Ta-yüan [in 101 B.C.], . . . a force of several hundred agricultural conscripts (*t'ien-tsu*) was established in Lun-t'ai (Bugur) and Ch'ü-li (Kurla), respectively. An office of "colonel for the assistance of imperial envoys" (*shih-che hsiao-wei*) was created to take charge of and protect [these farming lands. The grain produced] was to be used to supply the Han envoys sent abroad.

Since Chang Ch'ien's trip to Wu-sun around 115 B.C., Han had sent frequent large-sized diplomatic missions to the Western Regions, sometimes as often as five to ten or more times a year; even the smallest

115 *K'un-mi* is an alternative form of *k'un-mo*; see note 90 above. By this time the Wu-sun state had been divided between a greater and a lesser *k'un-mi*, both of whom were clients of Han (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 44).

116 *HS* 96B, pp. 3908f. (Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 158–61). 117 *HHS* 88, p. 2931.

118 *Chin shu* 122, p. 3055, and Meng Ch'ih, "Ts'ung Hsin-chiang li-shih wen-wu k'an Han-tai tsai Hsi-yü ti cheng-chih ts'o-shih ho ching-chi chien-she," p. 28.

119 *HS* 96A, p. 3873 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 76).

mustered a hundred men, and the large caravans comprised several hundred members.[120] Food supplies had proved from the very beginning a difficult problem, and small states in the area settled at the isolated oases had always complained that Han placed a heavy financial burden on them by asking that they provide food and other services to the envoys. It was to solve this problem that the first agricultural garrisons were set up in Bugur and Kurla (both are to the east of Kucha, along the south face of the T'ien-shan Mountains).

As subsequent Han expansion in the west required a constant Chinese military presence, the need for food supplies increased greatly. Han had to enlarge its system of colonies if it was to support these armies. During the reign of Chao-ti (87–74 B.C.), the court adopted a proposal made earlier by Sang Hung-yang that the agricultural garrisons in the Bugur area should be expanded. A hostage prince from the state of Wu-mi (Karadong, northeast of Khotan) was appointed a colonel and sent out to implement the plan.[121] In the time of Hsüan-ti (r. 74–49 B.C.), under the administration of Cheng Chi the number of farming soldiers in Kurla alone increased to 1,500. The grain produced there was used to support military campaigns against Turfan, which was at the time under Hsiung-nu domination. It is interesting to note that on at least two occasions Han forces had to wait until after autumn harvests to launch their attacks. After the conquest of Turfan, Cheng Chi wasted no time in establishing colonies in the fertile lands of that state. Keenly aware of the vital importance of Turfan as an economic base for Han, the Hsiung-nu made repeated attempts to retake the area and specifically warned Han to dismantle its colonies there.[122]

Cherchen was another area where Han colonies were well developed. In 77 B.C. the king of Cherchen had offered I-hsün (Miran), a fertile territory under his control, to Han for this purpose. Although in the beginning the establishment was not large, consisting of only forty farming soldiers, it was soon expanded and placed under a commandant (*tu-wei*).[123]

According to the *Shui-ching chu*, a certain So Mai, a native of Tun-huang, was sent with a thousand soldiers to develop the Miran colony. He was assisted in this by some three thousand local soldiers from Cherchen, Karashahr, and Kucha. With sufficient manpower at his disposal, he began to build dikes and canals, redirecting the flow of a major river of the locality to feed the elaborate new irrigation network which he had set up. It was reported that in just three years, he was able to accumulate as much as

120 *SC* 123, p. 3170 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, p. 275).
121 *HS* 96B, pp. 3912–16 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 166–74).
122 *HS* 96B, pp. 3922f. (Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 184f.).
123 *HS* 96A, p. 3878 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 91f.).

20,000 kiloliters of grain.[124] Traces of this irrigation network have recently been found at Miran (in modern Ch'o-ch'iang hsien, Sinkiang). Among the ruins are watergates and canals, one canal being as long as 2 kilometers.

Sites of other Han military colonies have been discovered in Lun-t'ai hsien and Sha-ya hsien. In Lun-t'ai, there are ruins of ditches and paths of agricultural fields; in Sha-ya, there is an irrigation canal 8 meters wide, 3 meters deep, and over 100 kilometers long, on both sides of which are clear traces of ancient farmlands. The identification of these ruins with the Han colonies is beyond doubt. Moreover, on the northern bank of Lop Nor, the Han site of Cherchen, some seventy Han wooden strips dated between 49–8 B.C. have been unearthed. These wooden documents reveal a good deal about the organization of Han agricultural garrisons, and about the life of the soldiers and their families stationed there.[125]

Under the Later Han dynasty too, military colonies were maintained in some parts of the Western Regions. Owing to the changed political situation these were generally on a much smaller scale, and without the continuity and stability of the preceding age. The most important site during this period was Hami. After Han defeated the northern Hsiung-nu and occupied the fertile lands of Hami (A.D. 73), a colony was immediately established there under the care of a newly created office, the commandant in charge of crops (*i-ho tu-wei*). Its operation was disrupted in 77 by joint attacks by the northern Hsiung-nu and their allies. It was reestablished after the reconquest of the Western Regions by Pan Ch'ao in 91. The largest development project in Hami was begun in 119, when So Pan led a force of over a thousand troops to cultivate the lands there, but the operation was unfortunately cut short by another Hsiung-nu invasion. The Han empire made a last effort to reestablish the Hami colonies in 131. A major's office (*i-wu ssu-ma*) was set up in Hami to direct the operation, which probably survived for over two decades. After 153, however, as Han power declined, rebellions broke out again and again, and the Hami colonies were gradually abandoned.[126]

Throughout the Later Han period, it may be observed, the Chinese government showed great reluctance to maintain costly tributary relations with the western states. The two major efforts to reconquer the Western

124 *Shui-ching chu* (SPPY ed.) 2, p. 6b.

125 See Hsin-chiang Wei-wu-erh tzu-chih-ch'ü po-wu-kuan, *Hsin-chiang li-shih wen-wu* (Peking, 1978), pp. 11–12; Huang Wen-pi, *Lo-pu-nao-erh k'ao-ku chi* (Peiping, 1948); and Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, pp. 7–8, 130 note 29. For a summary of the archeological evidence, see Meng Ch'ih, "Ts'ung Hsin-chiang li-shih wen-wu k'an Han-tai tsai Hsi-yü ti cheng-chih ts'o-shih ho ching-chi chien-she."

126 *HHS* 88, pp. 2909–12. For a seal engraved *ssu-ho fu-yin*, which was discovered at a Han site in Niya, Sinkiang, see *WW* 1975.7, Plate 8 (no. 1).

Regions in 74 and 91 were forced upon the Han government by northern Hsiung-nu raids on the northwestern frontier. From the early years of Kuang-wu-ti (A.D. 25–57) until the end of An-ti's reign (106–125), whenever trouble began to develop in the Western Regions, there were those who advised "closing the Jade Gate"; their arguments invariably rested on the hard fact of financial strain.[127] After the reopening of the Western Regions in 73, Han twice withdrew from the area and abolished the office of protector-general, in the periods 77–90 and 107–122. The office was never reestablished after 107. When Pan Yung eventually persuaded the court to resume relations with the western states in 123, the office was replaced by that of chief clerk (*chang-shih*), a post ranked at the grade of "one thousand bushels of grain." This clearly indicates that it was Han policy to downgrade its administrative establishment in the Western Regions,[128] presumably also for financial reasons.

Apart from administrative costs, the colonies constituted another major drain on Han finances. Early in Cheng Chi's tenure as protector-general (59–49 B.C.), the court had already turned down, on financial grounds, a proposal to expand the colonies.[129] As Pan Yung's memorial of A.D. 119 reveals, the Later Han abandonment of the Western Regions during the period 107–122 was made necessary by the tremendous expenditures being laid out on the colonies.[130] Moreover, the maintenance of the Han tributary system in the Western Regions involved Han in still another sort of economic liability, financial aid to the tributary states. As Mao Chen neatly put it in a memorial submitted in 119:[131]

> Once the office of colonel (*hsiao-wei*) is re-established, then envoys from the Western Regions will follow one another [to China] making endless demands for aid. To meet them is beyond our means, but to reject them will surely cause alienation.

This dilemma had its roots in the history of Han relations with the western states. Since the resumption of tributary relations with the Western Regions in A.D. 73, it had been an established practice for Han to make regular payments to the tributary states which amounted to a total of 74,800,000 cash a year.[132] In view of Mao Chen's statement, it was not at all inconceivable that some of the states may even have asked for more than the fixed amount from time to time. From the point of view of state finance, therefore, the obvious lack of enthusiasm of the Later Han for pursuing relations of lasting stability with the Western Regions is quite understandable.

127 *HHS* 47, p. 1587; *HHS* 88, p. 2911.
128 For the history of the post of protector-general, see Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 110f.
129 *HHS* 96B, p. 3923 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 188).
130 *HHS* 47, p. 1587. 131 *HHS* 47, pp. 1588–89.
132 For the extent of the payments due as tribute, see Yü, *Trade and expansion*, p. 61.

THE CH'IANG

Both literary and archeological evidence shows that during the Shang and the Chou periods, peoples who came from the west and who may have been ancestors of the Tibetans had been active in parts of modern Shansi, Shensi, and even Honan. They were frequently at war with Shang, and it was largely due to their pressure that the Chou kings eventually had to move their capital from Hao near modern Sian eastward to Lo-yang. Not until the rise of the Ch'in kingdom in the west under the vigorous leadership of Duke Mu (659–621 B.C.) was the Ch'iang expansion effectively checked.

A border people: tribal organization

In early Han times the Ch'iang people inhabited the regions along the western and southwestern frontiers of China. While the largest single concentration was probably in the high plains of Tibet and Ch'inghai, individual groups were also scattered throughout the Western Regions, Kansu, Yunnan, and Szechwan.[133] In fact, from antiquity to the Ch'in and Han periods, there had been a noticeable Ch'iang migration from the northwest to the southwest. According to the *Hou-Han shu*, down to the Han period there were no fewer than 150 Ch'iang tribes of various sizes. One large tribe called Great Tsang-i, living beyond the border of Shu (Szechwan), was reported in A.D. 94 as having a population of over half a million. During the reign of Shun-ti (A.D. 125–144), another tribe named Chung in Lung-hsi (in Kansu) could reportedly field a military force of over 100,000 men, indicating a population as large as that of the Great Tsang-i. If we can lend some credence to an early Han estimate of the total Hsiung-nu population as being no larger than that of a large county (*hsien*), then the numerical strength of the Ch'iang probably surpassed that of the Hsiung-nu.[134]

However, unlike the Hsiung-nu, the Ch'iang people never coalesced into a tribal federation. On the contrary, there existed among the Ch'iang a pronounced tendency toward fission:[135]

133 For general accounts of the Ch'iang in Han and pre-Han times, see Hu Chao-hsi, "Lun Han Chin ti Ti-Ch'iang ho Sui-T'ang i-hou ti Ch'iang-tsu," *LSYC*, 1963.2, 153–70; Li Shao-ming, "Kuan-yü Ch'iang-tsu ku-tai-shih ti chi ko wen-t'i," *LSYC*, 1963.5, 165–82; and Kuan Tung-kuei, "Han-tai ti Ch'iang-tsu," *Shih-huo*, NS 1:1 (1971), 15–20, 1:2 (1971), 13–23.

134 *HS* 48, p. 2241, carries Chia I's statement regarding the population of the Hsiung-nu, but this figure should be regarded as being more rhetorical than realistic. For a more recent estimate of the population of the Hsiung-nu, see Lü Ssu-mien, *Yen-shih cha-chi* (Shanghai, 1937), pp. 127–31. For the figures given for the strength of the Ch'iang tribes, see *HHS* 87, pp. 2898–99.

135 *HHS* 87, p. 2869.

As a people they neither established a lord-vassal relationship nor developed a system of control and solidarity among themselves. When a group grew in population and strength to a certain point they would split into several tribes, each under the leadership of a powerful chieftain, but when a group declined, they would attach themselves to a powerful tribe as followers.

Moreover, as the general Chao Ch'ung-kuo pointed out in 63 B.C.:[136]

It is relatively easy to bring the Ch'iang under control because they are divided into many warlike tribes and always attack each other. It is not in their nature to become unified.

Only when they felt an urgent need to unite to resist a common enemy such as Han were they able temporarily to put aside their own disputes in order to take concerted action.

Philological evidence shows that the name Ch'iang derives etymologically from the root word sheep (*yang*).[137] In Han times, herding continued to be dominant in the Ch'iang economy, although it was not confined to sheep. Animals captured from the Ch'iang by Han forces, often in large numbers, included oxen, horses, sheep, donkeys, and camels.

In some areas along the northwestern frontiers of Han China the Ch'iang picked up agricultural techniques, but it is difficult to determine when they became land tillers. As early as the fifth century B.C., a great Ch'iang culture hero named Yüan-chien is reported to have taught his people the art of farming after his escape from the state of Ch'in, where he had long been kept as a slave.[138] It is possible that he introduced the farming methods of the Ch'in Chinese to his people. In the first century B.C., the general Chao Ch'ung-kuo already spoke of "the farming lands previously belonging to the Ch'iang barbarians" in the vast area between Lin-Ch'iang (Ch'inghai) and Hao-men (Kansu).[139] Under the Later Han dynasty several Ch'iang tribes reportedly combined farming with herding in Chinese frontier provinces such as the fertile lands of Yü-ku in Hsi-hai (in Ninghsia) and Ch'ing-shan in Pei-ti (in Kansu).

Wheat appears to have been the staple agricultural product of the Ch'iang. In 61 B.C. Hsüan-ti asked Chao Ch'ung-kuo whether, if the general decided to attack the K'an Ch'iang tribe in the first month of the coming lunar year, they would have already run away after reaping their wheat in the harvest season.[140] In A.D. 94 a successful Han attack on tribes in Yü-ku resulted in the capture of, among other things, an enor-

136 *HS* 69, p. 2972.

137 Some scholars of the T'ang period defined the term "Ch'iang" as "shepherd"; see the *Shuo-wen chieh-tzu* (Peking, 1963), p. 78b.

138 *HHS* 87, p. 2875. 139 *HS* 69, p. 2986. 140 *HS* 69, p. 2979.

mous quantity of wheat.[141] According to the *Hou-Han shu*, however, by the second century at the latest, the Ch'iang cultivated other cereal crops as well.

Alliance with the Hsiung-nu

At the beginning of the Han dynasty, the Ch'iang people were an important ally of the Hsiung-nu. Although Chinese sources claim that Mao-tun had forced the Ch'iang to submit,[142] there are indications that cultural affinities may have drawn the Ch'iang closer to the Hsiung-nu than to Han. Han expansion into the Ho-hsi region (the Kansu corridor) under Wu-ti was intended to cut the Hsiung-nu off not only from the Western Regions, but from the Ch'iang as well. In 88 B.C., when the powerful Hsien-ling tribe sent an envoy to the Hsiung-nu seeking a military alliance, the Hsiung-nu responded enthusiastically, sending a delegate to the Ch'iang with the following message:[143]

> The Ch'iang have suffered owing to the Han campaigns. Chang-i and Chiu-ch'üan were originally ours and the land is fertile; it would be suitable for us to make a joint attack and settle there.

Two centuries later, in A.D. 122, 138, and 140, we still find Hsiung-nu forces joining with the Ch'iang in wars against the Han. The Later Han court was fully aware of the links that had been forged between the two neighbors. In 102, after a major Ch'iang revolt in Hsi-hai and Yü-ku had been suppressed, the court adopted the proposal of a Ts'ao Feng to tighten the control of regular local administrative units, such as commanderies and counties, as well as to establish agricultural garrisons in the area. The court considered these to be the most effective measures "to cut off all communication between the Ch'iang and the Hsiung-nu."[144]

Before Han secured the Ho-hsi area, the Western Regions had served as the meeting ground for the Ch'iang and Hsiung-nu. As Wang Shun and Liu Hsin pointed out in 6 B.C., Wu-ti had established the frontier commanderies of Tun-huang, Chiu-ch'üan, and Chang-i with the specific aim of separating the Ch'o-Ch'iang from the Hsiung-nu, thereby "cutting off the right arm" of the latter.[145] The Ch'o-Ch'iang were a powerful Ch'iang tribe, described as the firsr state southwest of the Yang barrier on rhe route to the west (in the mountains southeast of Lop Nor). By the middle of the

141 *HHS* 87, p. 2883. 142 *HHS* 87, p. 2876. 143 *HS* 69, p. 2973.
144 *HHS* 87, pp. 2892f.; *HHS* 89, p. 2960. For Ts'ao Feng, see *HHS* 87, p. 2885.
145 *HS* 73, p. 3126; *HHS* 89, p. 2912. For the Ch'o-Ch'iang, see Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 80 note 70.

first century A.D. they had dwindled to insignificance, with a registered population of only 1,750 individuals. But in the early years of the Han dynasty, they had been active throughout an extremely large area in the Western Regions, stretching along the K'un-lun Mountains from the neighborhood of Tun-huang in the east to the Pamir in the west. The king of the Ch'o-Ch'iang bore the unique title *ch'ü-Hu-lai*, "the king who had abandoned the Hsiung-nu and made over to the Han empire." This suggests that the Ch'o-Ch'iang must have been forced to switch sides after Han expansion to the northwest. After their submission the Ch'o-Ch'iang not only joined the Han side to fight against the Hsiung-nu, but also occasionally took part in punitive campaigns against other Ch'iang tribes.[146]

Han attempts at settlement

The Ch'iang did not become a serious threat to the Han imperial order until early in the second century. But when they did, it was a threat very different from that of the Hsiung-nu. Unlike the Hsiung-nu, who raided Han territory from their own base beyond the Han frontier, the Ch'iang often caused severe trouble within the empire. Hou Ying pointed out in 33 B.C. that:[147]

> The Western Ch'iang of late offered to guard [our] frontier. Thus, they were in daily intercourse with the Chinese. The Chinese frontier officials as well as [powerful] people, bent on gain, often robbed the Ch'iang of their cattle, women, and children. This incurred the hatred of the Ch'iang and consequently they revolted against China from time to time.

Sixty years later, exactly the same state of affairs continued to trouble the Later Han court. A memorial of Pan Piao dated A.D. 33 described the situation thus:[148]

> Now in Liang-chou [Kansu] there are surrendered Ch'iang peoples who still lead a barbarian way of life. Nevertheless, they are living together with the Chinese. Since the two peoples are different in social customs and cannot communicate in language, very often the Chinese petty officials and crafty people take the advantage ro rob the Ch'iang of their belongings. Extremely enraged and yet helpless, they thus rise in revolt. We can almost say that this is the cause of all barbarian rebellions.

146 *HS* 96A, p. 3875 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 80f.); Ku Chieh-kang, *Shih-lin tsa-shih*, pp. 69–73. For a bronze seal engraved *Han kuei-i Ch'iang chang*, "chieftain of [one of the tribes of] the Ch'iang who has made over to the Han cause," which probably dates from the Former Han period, see Hsiao Chih-hsing, "Shih shih 'Han kuei-i Ch'iang chang' yin," *WW*, 1976.7, 86.

147 *HS* 94B, p. 3804; (Yü, *Trade and expansion*, pp. 52–53).

148 *HHS* 87, p. 2878 (Yü, *Trade and expansion*, p. 53).

The earliest recorded settlement of Ch'iang in Han territory took place during the reign of Ching-ti (157–141 B.C.), when the Yen tribe under a chief named Liu-ho asked permission to guard the Lung-hsi frontier. The request was approved, and the tribe was settled in five counties of Lung-hsi commandery. In the time of Hsüan-ti (74–49 B.C.), a group of Hsien-ling tribesmen also crossed the Yellow River (in Kansu) and settled in Han territory, in spite of Han attempts to prevent them from doing so. The period from the end of Wang Mang's reign to the beginning of the Later Han dynasty witnessed a large-scale Ch'iang migration into the northwestern frontier provinces. By A.D. 34, for instance, when Kuang-wu-ti gained control of Liang-chou (Kansu) following the death of Wei Ao, who had maintained an effective local regime in the area over the span of a decade, it turned out that most counties of Chin-ch'eng commandery were populated by the Ch'iang.[149] Confronted with this new situation, the Later Han court adopted a more inclusive policy and sought to absorb various Ch'iang tribes into the empire. In A.D. 35, after the general Ma Yüan subdued a rebellion of Hsien-ling tribes in Lung-hsi, he settled the tribes in T'ien-shui and Lung-hsi commanderies and some even in one part of the metropolitan area (Fu-feng). The settlement of Ch'iang there was particularly ominous, for the door now lay open for the Ch'iang to penetrate to the heartland of Han China. Thus in A.D. 50 we find another group of surrendered Ch'iang, seven thousand in number, also transferred from the frontiers to the three divisions of Kuan-chung. The Ch'iang population grew so rapidly that by the early fourth century it was estimated that "of the one million odd [registered] population in the Kuan-chung area, half were barbarians."[150]

The policy of settling Ch'iang tribes within China was probably based on several considerations. First, since the Ch'iang tended to join forces with the Hsiung-nu in attacking the frontiers, one effective method of separating the two peoples would be to place some of the potentially hostile Ch'iang tribes under the direct supervision of the Chinese administration. Second, throughout the Han period the Ch'iang population had been noted for its unusually high growth rate. To move Ch'iang groups continually into Han territory, especially the interior, would alleviate the ever-growing pressures from Ch'iang populations in the frontier regions. Third, as we have seen earlier, some Ch'iang groups had gradually turned from pastoralism to agriculture. To settle the Ch'iang inside the empire among Chinese would accelerate their adoption of a settled agricultural way of life and thus their assimilation into the larger Chinese population.

149 *HHS* 87, pp. 2876f. 150 *CS* 56, p. 1533.

Han administrative systems

However, over the centuries the Han government had gradually developed a number of institutional devices to deal with the Ch'iang along the frontier. Let us begin with the office of colonel-protector of the Ch'iang (*hu-Ch'iang hsiao-wei*). This office was first established in 111 B.C., following Han pacification of a large-scale Ch'iang rebellion in the Lung-hsi and Chin-ch'eng area.[151] According to Pan Piao's memorial of A.D. 33, the colonel-protector was given general authority to coordinate all matters relating to the Ch'iang. With regard to the Ch'iang groups inside the empire, it was his duty to handle all their complaints and find out about their needs and problems through regular tours of inspection. He was also required to send interpreters several times a year to the Ch'iang living beyond the frontiers to keep the lines of communication open. With the outer Ch'iang serving as "ears and eyes" for the Chinese officials, the frontier provinces would always be kept on the alert for defense.[152]

The size of this office's staff was not fixed and could be expanded in response to the needs of a situation. However, it normally included two aides-de-camp (*ts'ung-shih*), two chief clerks (*chang-shih*), two majors (*ssu-ma*), and a number of interpreters.[153] The primary responsibility of the colonel-protector was to maintain peace and stability on the frontiers by cultivating the trust and goodwill of the Ch'iang. Thus, in 60 B.C., Chao Ch'ung-kuo objected to the appointment of Hsin T'ang as colonel-protector of the Ch'iang on the ground that the latter's alcoholism would alienate the barbarians and cause trouble, a judgment later proved to be sound.[154] Like the protector-general of the Western Regions, the colonel-protector of the Ch'iang was also charged with the task of establishing agricultural garrisons known as *t'un-t'ien*. The placement of such establishments in the Han-Ch'iang border area was originally proposed by Chao Ch'ung-kuo to cope with the problem of provisioning the Chinese garrison forces.[155] With the difficulty of logistics removed in this way, Ch'iang rebellions or raids could be dealt with locally without involving a nationwide mobilization.

At the height of its power, around A.D. 102, the Han empire established no fewer than thirty-four agricultural garrisons in the Chin-ch'eng area. The Ch'iang were fully aware of the military threat of these outposts and often took their establishment as a sign of malevolent intent on the part of Han. In A.D. 130, for example, when Han colonies were established too close to Ch'iang territory, the Ch'iang tribes immediately became suspi-

151 *HHS* 87, pp. 2876–77. For dating, see *HS* 6, p. 188. 152 *HHS* 87, p. 2878.
153 For the supporting staff of the *hu-Ch'iang hsiao-wei*, see *HHS* 28 (tr.), pp. 3626–27.
154 *HS* 69, p. 2993. 155 *HS* 69, pp. 2985f. (Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 226f.).

cious and began to make preparations for a revolt. The protector-general, Ma Hsü, eventually abandoned the settlements in order to placate them.[156] If such difficulties could not be settled by peaceful means, it was the responsibility of the colonel-protector to control the rebellious Ch'iang by force of arms. Under the Later Han dynasty the majority were forced to resort to military measures, and at least four were killed on the battlefield (Fu Yü in A.D. 87, Ma Hsien in 141, Chao Ch'ung in 144, and Ling Cheng in 184).[157]

Next in importance to the colonel-protector was the office of the commandant of dependent states (*shu-kuo tu-wei*) who had specific responsibility for barbarians who had submitted. The earliest dependent state (*shu-kuo*) set up for Ch'iang tribes was established in Chin-ch'eng in 60 B.C. Since the Ch'iang were distributed all along the northwestern and southwestern borders, by the Later Han period the number of Ch'iang dependent states had increased considerably. As far as can be determined, they existed in at least five of the ten areas where they are listed in the *Hou-Han shu*—namely, Shang-chün (in the Ordos), Chang-i (Kansu), An-ting (Kansu), Kuang-han (in Szechwan), and Chien-wei (Szechwan).

This situation suggests that each commandant's office was actually in charge of several dependent states. For example, in Shang-chün there were Hsiung-nu as well Kuchan groups which had surrendered. Hsiung-nu dependent states can also be found in An-ting and Chang-i. With the expansion of these units in the Later Han period, the authority of the commandant of the dependent states was also widened. Already possessing military authority, the commandant was now given administrative powers comparable to those wielded by the governor of a commandery. He had jurisdiction over a number of counties and so governed frontier Chinese as well. This restructuring of the dependent states took place during the reign of An-ti (A.D. 106–125), a period marked by particularly widespread Ch'iang rebellions.[158]

In theory, inhabitants of the dependent states were allowed to live according to their own social customs, and the commandant's control over them was basically of a supervisory nature. However, after a century and a half of development in the Liang-chou area, the degree of control exercised over the Ch'iang had been tightened considerably. The role of the commandant was therefore of decisive importance to the stabilization of Han–Ch'iang relations. For example, when in A.D. 55 Chang Huan was ap-

156 *HHS* 87, pp. 2885, 2894. 157 *HHS* 87, pp. 2882, 2895–97; *HHS* 72, p. 2320.

158 *HS* 8, p. 262 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 243); *HHS* 4, p. 170; *HHS* 5, pp. 206, 211, 237; *HHS* (tr.) 23, pp. 3514–15, 3521. For the *shu-kuo tu-wei*, see Kamada Shigeo, *Shin Kan seiji seido no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1962), pp. 329f.; Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, pp. 61f.

pointed commandant of the dependent states at An-ting, he discovered, much to his dismay, that all eight of his predecessors had been corrupt and had pressed the Ch'iang for personal gain, thereby causing the Ch'iang great hardships. Being a man of moral integrity, he set a good example by refusing to accept the gift of horses and gold presented by the chieftain of the Hsien-ling tribe. Thus he not only transformed the Ch'iang's image of the commandant's office, but also substantially improved relations between the Ch'iang and the Han government.[159] This incident serves to confirm the judgment of Pan Piao, that the corruption of Han frontier officials was indeed "the cause of all barbarian rebellions" (see p. 425 above).

The expansion of the system of dependent states under Later Han was essentially a response to a new situation created by the Ch'iang people on the frontier. As has been shown above, from the beginning of the Later Han dynasty various Ch'iang tribes had been drifting into Liang-chou; some had even penetrated as far as the Kuan-chung area. These barbarians could not be immediately incorporated into the regular administrative system of commandery and county, so more dependent states had to be created to accommodate them. During An-ti's reign (A.D. 106–125), two commandant's offices were created especially to look after the Ch'iang settlements in the Kuan-chung area (one in Ching-chao, another in Fu-feng). In the same period, Ch'iang tribes along the southwestern frontiers also asked to be included in the Han empire.

In Shu-chün the Great Ts'ang-i tribe surrendered to the provincial government with more than half a million people as "inner subjects" (*nei-shu*) in A.D. 94. Then in 107 and 108, respectively, altogether fourteen Ch'iang tribes, totalling 55,180 individuals, followed suit. In the winter of 108 the 2,400 members of the Ts'an-lang tribe were also admitted to Kuang-han commandery as inner subjects. It is clear that in the Later Han period, and especially during the second century, a large-scale movement of Ch'iang populations was taking place from points all along the western border into China proper. This migration was probably impelled by population pressures.[160]

To gain the status of inner subjects of Han China, the Ch'iang, like many other barbarians, accepted the obligation to render services to the Han government, either as laborers or in the armed forces. Servicemen from the Ch'iang dependent states figured prominently in Han campaigns against frontier barbarians. The tribes were probably also subject to taxation of some kind, though the Chinese sources are not very clear about this point. If they were settled in the frontier area, it was their duty to guard

159 *HHS* 65, p. 2138. 160 *HHS* 87, pp. 2887, 2897.

the Han frontiers as "ears and eyes" of the Chinese government. To fulfill the Han tributary requirement, Ch'iang chieftains also brought tribute to pay homage at the Han court. Since, however, the Ch'iang were divided into numerous tribal groups, this practice was confined to the more powerful ones. For instance, chieftains of the famous Shao-tang tribe are reported to have made homage trips to the capital in A.D. 59, 98, and 170, respectively. In return, the Han court honored them with official titles and seals in the same way as it did with the rulers of the various states in the Western Regions.[161]

Policies of withdrawal

By the second century there were clear indications that Ch'iang pressure was growing too great for the Han administrative structure to withstand, despite the readjustment and expansion of the dependent states. When a large-scale Ch'iang rebellion broke out in Liang-chou in A.D. 110, the immediate Han reaction was to abandon the entire northwestern frontier area to the Ch'iang. In a court meeting over which Teng Chih, the general-in-chief (regent) who was then in power presided, the majority of officials were in favor of the evacuation of Liang-chou on the grounds of financial and logistical difficulties. Teng Chih himself strongly inclined toward this view. The principal advocate of this policy was P'ang Ts'an, a man extremely knowledgeable about frontier affairs, who had recently been charged with the task of supervising the military colonies in the Kuan-chung area. In his report to Teng Chih he argued cogently, among other things, that military campaigns against the Ch'iang in the past had not only drained the treasury, but also exhausted the wealth of the people of Liang-chou. In fact, the government had already forced the people of Liang-chou to contribute hundreds of millions of cash in loans. Should the court continue the current policy of defending Liang-chou, Kuan-chung would surely be the next area to be similarly ruined. He therefore proposed that China withdraw completely from Liang-chou and move all the frontier Chinese to Kuan-chung, where the population was sparse and arable land extensive.[162]

Though P'ang Ts'an's proposal was closely reasoned on the basis of an objective assessment of the situation, those who supported it at the court may have been differently motivated. Those who benefitted most from the proposed withdrawal were the commandery governors and county magistrates of Liang-chou. For, according to the Han law of avoidance, in order to avoid any possible conflict of interest no official could be appointed to a

161 *HHS* 4, p. 185; *HHS* 87, pp. 2880, 2898. 162 *HHS* 51, pp. 1686f.

position of governmental authority in his native commandery or county. This law was even more strictly enforced in the Later Han period than in the Former Han. As a result, practically all the court-appointed local officials of Liang-chou were men from interior provinces who, thinking of their own safety, argued for evacuation. The views of this group found powerful expression in the court. Although the proposal of total withdrawal was not formally adopted in 110, in the next year at least four northwestern commanderies (Lung-hsi, An-ting, Pei-ti, and Shang-chün) abandoned their frontier regions and withdrew toward the interior. Such a move testifies to the extent to which Liang-chou had been subject to pressure from the Ch'iang.[163]

It is equally important to note that the withdrawal proposal met with general resistance from the local leaders of Liang-chou. As P'ang Ts'an revealed, on several earlier occasions his proposal to abandon the Western Regions had drawn criticism from the literati of the western provinces. It was only natural that from the point of view of the natives of Liang-chou, his proposal of 110 was even more objectionable. One of these literati happened to be Wang Fu, an eminent political thinker from An-ting. Wang's general assessment of the frontier situation was in basic agreement with P'ang's. However, being from Liang-chou, he argued for military action:[164]

> Formerly when the Ch'iang had just begun to revolt against China, all the ranking ministers and generals in the court proposed to abandon Liang-chou and preserve the metropolitan area. But the court did not agree. Later, the Ch'iang made further invasions and many of the critics regretted that the proposal had not been adopted. I consider such a view to be ridiculous. For to be in a dilemma like this one would end up in regretting either decision. . . . No country can exist without frontiers. A country without frontiers is a country that has perished. Therefore if Liang-chou were to be lost, then the metropolitan area would become the frontier; if the metropolitan area were to be lost, then Hung-nung would become the frontier; if Hung-nung were to be lost, then Lo-yang would become the frontier. If we were to take this to its logical conclusion, even were we to withdraw to the eastern seaboard, there would still be a frontier.

Wang Fu also made the case for the people of Liang-chou:[165]

> Suppose it were the children of the ranking ministers who were subject to suffering from the Ch'iang and, day and night, were in the perilous situation of the frontier people; these ministers would be vying with one another to propose the extermination of the Ch'iang.

In fact, the idea of withdrawal was even more distasteful to the common people of Liang-chou. On the occasion of the evacuation of the four frontier provinces in A.D. 111, the commoners were all unwilling to leave their

163 *HHS* 5, p. 216. 164 *Ch'ien-fu lun* 5 (22), p. 258. 165 *CFL* 5 (22), p. 262.

settlements. The local government was ultimately forced to resort to such drastic measures as burning their homes, ruining their crops, and destroying their stores in order to force them out. As a result, a large group of frontier Chinese revolted against Han and joined the Ch'iang.[166]

It was precisely out of fear that abandonment of the area would turn the entire Chinese population against the Han cause that the court decided not to adopt it as a policy in 110. As was pointed out by Yü Hsü, who spoke eloquently against evacuation in the court, the Ch'iang did not dare to move into the Kuan-chung area just because the highly militarized Chinese population of Liang-chou still maintained their allegiance to the Han empire. But they would surely harbor different ideas if Han abandoned the territory in which they lived and sought to force them to leave their homes. Should the powerful leaders of Liang-chou organize their people in an open rebellion against Han, there would be no one in the empire who could possibly stop them from advancing eastward.[167]

During the first decade of An-ti's reign (107–118), the numerous campaigns fought for the defense of Liang-chou cost Han the astronomical sum of 24,000,000,000 *wu-shu* coins,[168] and still the gains won in these campaigns were limited and temporary. In 129 the court ordered that three frontier commanderies – An-ting, Pei-ti, and Shang-chün – be reestablished in the abandoned territories, but just a decade later they were again removed. From 140 onward the Ch'iang pushed farther east into interior China.[169] From time to time reports of large-scale Ch'iang raids into the metropolitan area reached the court. More frontier commanderies had to be abandoned, either partially or even entirely, to Ch'iang and other barbarians. The total evacuation of both An-ting and Pei-ti from Liang-chou to the Kuan-chung area is particularly indicative of the gravity of the Ch'iang threat. Just as Wang Fu had feared, the metropolitan area had become the frontier. According to Tuan Chiung's memorial of 168, the northwestern frontier region, extending from Yün-chung and Wu-yüan in the Ordos to Han-yang in Kansu (over 800 kilometers or 500 miles), had all fallen into the hands of the Ch'iang and Hsiung-nu.[170]

The Liang-chou rebellion, 184–221

The pattern of Han retreat from the western and northwestern frontiers in the second century suggests that historical forces of a more fundamental

166 *HHS* 87, pp. 2887–88.
167 *HHS* 58, p. 1866; *HHS* 87, p. 2893. For Yü Hsü, see Chapter 4 above, pp. 302, 306.
168 *HHS* 87, p. 2891. 169 *HHS* 6, pp. 256, 269; *HHS* 87, pp. 2893, 2896.
170 *HHS* 65, p. 2148.

and complex nature must have been at work. The contemporary diagnosis attributing all Ch'iang troubles to misgovernment and exploitation on the part of Han frontier officials, though undoubtedly valid to a large extent, may well have mistaken symptoms for causes. As far as our textual evidence permits, two underlying historical trends may be briefly discussed. The first, already referred to above, is a rapid growth of Ch'iang population. Fan Yeh, in his historical account of the Ch'iang people, writes:[171]

> According to the custom of the Ch'iang . . . when a father dies a son will take the stepmother to wife, and when an elder brother dies, a younger brother will marry the sister-in-law. As a result there is no widowed person in their society and their race proliferates rapidly.

Here the historian obviously found it necessary to provide some kind of explanation for the extraordinary phenomenon of Ch'iang overpopulation. The same phenomenon is also clearly revealed in contemporary reports of Han frontier generals such as Chang Huan and Tuan Chiung, which often express a deep sense of frustration that the Ch'iang were simply too numerous to be appeased, contained, or exterminated.

The second tendency to be noted is the cultural and social transformation of the frontier region, especially Liang-chou, arising from the development over time of mixed settlements incorporating Han Chinese and Ch'iang and other minorities. Contrary to the expectation of the Han government, the immediate result of the policy of settling Ch'iang within the empire was, from the point of view of the Chinese historiographical tradition, to barbarize the frontier Chinese rather than to sinicize the Ch'iang. There is evidence that by the end of the second century, Liang-chou was socially and culturally very different from the eastern part of the empire. The Liang-chou population was often viewed with suspicion by Chinese of other regions. As Cheng T'ai pointed out to Tung Cho in 190, the whole empire was trembling with fear in face of the military power of Liang-chou, where even Chinese women had been transformed into fierce warriors under the influence of the Ch'iang.[172]

Having developed a combined Chinese–Ch'iang power base in Liang-chou, Tung Cho, a native of Lung-hsi, was able to dominate the Han court from 189 to 192.[173] In his younger days he had established a reputation as a man of great influence among the Ch'iang, and he continued to maintain friendly relations with many powerful Ch'iang tribal leaders. Ch'iang troops formed the backbone of the personal army that made him for a time the most powerful military leader of the empire. His behavior was so unlike

171 *HHS* 87, p. 2869. 172 *HHS* 70, p. 2258.
173 *HHS* 72, pp. 2319f. See Chapter 5 above, pp. 345f.

that of a Chinese that, in a rage, the widow of the famous general Huang-fu Kuei once called him "you son of a Ch'iang barbarian."[174] In fact, Liang-chou had probably been out of touch with the main intellectual and cultural traditions of Han China since the beginning of the second century. Concerned with the endless rebellions in Liang-chou, one memorialist even proposed to the court in 184 that every household in Liang-chou should have a copy of the *Book of filial piety* (*Hsiao ching*) and study it.[175] Naive as it may have been, the proposal clearly indicates that the area was seen as having fallen away from some of the basic premises of Chinese culture.

The large-scale rebellion of Liang-chou in 184 further illustrates the extent to which frontier peoples in the region, both Chinese and non-Chinese, had developed a common geographical identity of their own. It was actually a joint rebellion of Ch'iang, Hsiung-nu, and Yüeh-chih peoples, as well as Chinese, against the Han empire.[176] Two important rebel leaders, Pien Chang and Han Sui, were prominent Chinese magnates from the vicinity of Chin-ch'eng. Moreover, according to the memorial of Liu T'ao, many of the rebel generals had formerly been officers under the Han general Tuan Chiung. They were all well versed in the arts of war and familiar with the geography of the region. At about the same time, under the leadership of a Chinese named Sung Chien, a local Chinese–Ch'iang kingdom called P'ing-Han was established in Fu-han, Lung-hsi. That this frontier regime had set itself against the Han empire is revealed beyond doubt in its title, Pacifying Han. The kingdom lasted more than three decades until its conquest by Ts'ao Ts'ao in 214.[177]

The outbreak of the rebellion in 184 intensified Han fears of insecurity in the northwest. At a court conference held in 185, chancellor Ts'ui Lieh, who came from a family in Cho-chün (Hopei), argued that Liang-chou should be abandoned. But he was violently opposed by the court advisor Fu Hsieh from Pei-ti, who even demanded that the chancellor be executed for making such a proposal.[178] Once again in the Han court we see the idea of abandonment rejected by a native of the northwest, but advocated by someone from another region. The conflict between Fu Hsieh and Ts'ui Lieh should not be construed simply as a matter of personal views. It was an expression of the long-lasting contrast between the western frontier society of Liang-chou on the one hand and the eastern part of the empire (popularly known as Kuan-tung) on the other.

174 *HHS* 84, p. 2798. 175 *HHS* 58, p. 1880.
176 For a study of this rebellion, see Gustav Haloun, "The Liang-chou rebellion, 184–221 A.D.," *Asia Major*, NS 1:1 (1949), 119–32.
177 *HHS* 58, p. 1875; *HHS* 72, pp. 2320f.; *HHS* 87, p. 2898.
178 *HHS* 58, p. 1875 (Rafe de Crespigny, *The last of the Han: being the chronicle of the years 181–220 A.D. as recorded in chapters 58–68 of the* Tzu-chih t'ung-chien *of Ssu-ma Kuang* [Canberra, 1969], p. 26).

Toward the end of the second century, these two groups, led by Tung Cho and Yüan Shao, respectively, engaged in a life-and-death struggle at the court. When Tung Cho succeeded in establishing undisputed control over the court in 190, his very first step was to move the capital westward to Ch'ang-an, a place close to his power base in Liang-chou.[179] The mutual distrust and hostility between the two groups burst wide open in 192 following the assassination of Tung Cho. The situation is vividly described in the following account in the *Hou-Han shu*:[180]

> The generals and colonels of Tung Cho and those who were in power in the court were mostly people from Liang-chou. [Chancellor Wang] Yün proposed that their troops should be disbanded. Someone advised Yün, saying; "The Liang-chou people have always been fearful of Yüan [Shao] and the Kuan-tung group. Now if Your Excellency suddenly disbands these forces, every one will become alarmed. The best strategy for the time being would be to appoint Huang-fu Sung [a military leader from Liang-chou] as general to take command of their troops and keep them in Shen [in Honan] in order to ease their feelings. In the meantime Your Excellency should also slowly take steps to establish contact with the Kuan-tung people and wait to see how things develop." Yün said: "No. Those who have raised armies in Kuan-tung are our own followers. While we certainly can appease the Liang-chou group by allowing them to defend the passes and occupy Shen, in doing so we will surely arouse the suspicion of the Kuan-tung people. This definitely would not do!" At this time rumors began to circulate widely that all of the Liang-chou people would be put to death. As a result, they all became frightened and disturbed and those who were in the Kuan-chung area held on to their troops for self-protection.

Wang Yün's vengeful antagonism soon led to a disastrous armed confrontation with the entire Liang-chou group. Slight as it had been, the possibility of restoring order at the court following the death of Tung Cho was now irretrievably lost.

There can be little doubt that Liang-chou played a key role in the decline and fall of the Han empire. However, the rise of Liang-chou as a political force of the first magnitude in the last quarter of the second century cannot be understood purely in terms of the internal development of the empire. In the final analysis, it resulted directly from the cultural and social transformation of the region following the migration of the Ch'iang. Viewed in this way, Han relations with the Ch'iang produced more immediate consequences of historical importance for China than those with the Hsiung-nu, in spite of the latter's more conspicuous place in the history of the period.

179 *HHS* 72, p. 2327. 180 *HHS* 66, p. 2176.

THE EASTERN BARBARIANS: WU-HUAN AND HSIEN-PI

From the late Warring States times to the early years of the Han dynasty, the Wu-huan and Hsien-pi peoples were collectively known as the Tung-hu (Eastern Barbarians). They were so called because, according to the second-century scholar Ts'ui Hao, they had originally been located east of the Hsiung-nu (Hu), somewhere in modern Inner Mongolia.[181] The power of the Tung-hu reached its zenith at about the time that Mao-tun first became *shan-yü* of the Hsiung-nu, toward the end of the third century B.C., and they often invaded the lands of the Hsiung-nu to the west. However, the situation was soon reversed. In a surprise attack, Mao-tun conquered and subjugated the Tung-hu.[182]

The Tung-hu were probably a tribal federation founded by a number of nomadic peoples, including the Wu-huan and Hsien-pi. After its conquest by the Hsiung-nu, the federation apparently ceased to exist. Throughout the Han period, no trace can be found of activities of the Tung-hu as a political entity.

Although according to Chinese sources the Wu-huan and the Hsien-pi shared the same language and social customs, they were nevertheless clearly two different peoples, and during the Han period occasionally made war upon one another. Unlike rhe Hsiung-nu and the Ch'iang, the Wu-huan and Hsien-pi had had little, if any, direct contact with the Chinese before the Han dynasty. It was mainly as a result of the struggles between Han and the Hsiung-nu that the Wu-huan and Hsien-pi, and especially the former, were pulled into the Chinese world order. Evidence, both historical and archeological, shows that the Wu-huan had begun to establish official ties with China by the time of Wu-ti, whereas the Hsien-pi remained isolated from the Chinese court until the early years of the Later Han dynasty.[183]

Resettlement of the Wu-huan

After the Hsiung-nu had subdued the Wu-huan, they required of them regular annual tribute payments, mainly of oxen, horses, sheep, and furs. In 119 B.C., the Han general Huo Ch'ü-ping inflicted a crushing defeat on the Hsiung-nu, forcing the *shan-yü* to move his court away from Inner Mongolia. Han was thus able, for the first time, to split the Wu-huan from

181 *SC* 102, p. 2759. 182 *HS* 94A, p. 3750; *HHS* 90, p. 2979.

183 For a general survey of these peoples and their relations with the Han empire, see Ma Ch'ang-shou, *Wu-huan yü Hsien-pi* (Shanghai, 1962).

their Hsiung-nu overlords. To prevent them from continuing to provide the Hsiung-nu with human and natural resources, the Han court moved the Wu-huan to areas beyond the Great Wall along five northern and northeastern commanderies of the empire, Shang-ku, Yü-yang, Yu Pei-p'ing (modern Hopei), and Liao-hsi and Liao-tung (modern Liao-ning).

In making this move, the Han government was actually offering the Wu-huan the protection of the tributary system. The Wu-huan tribal chieftains were required to pay homage to the Han court once a year as a symbol of submission. The office of colonel-protector of the Wu-huan (*hu Wu-huan hsiao-wei*) was established at the same time, with its headquarters in a place near today's Peking. Although the main function of this office was to keep the Wu-huan from having contact with Hsiung-nu, the Wu-huan were assigned the specific task of monitoring the movements of the Hsiung-nu. It is important to note that the office of colonel-protector was first introduced as a new institutional device in the case of the Wu-huan. It not only preceded the office of colonel-protector of the Ch'iang by eight years, but also presumably served as a model for the more elaborate office of protector-general of the Western Regions established six decades later.[184]

It is however doubtful whether this Han office was able to exercise an effective control over the Wu-huan. We have reason to believe that throughout the Former Han period the Hsiung-nu continued to maintain their claims on the Wu-huan and, whenever possible, forced the latter to fulfill obligations as their subjects. For example, as late as A.D. 8 the Hsiung-nu sent envoys to collect animals and furs from the Wu-huan as "taxes." By this time, however, knowing that the Han court had already formally notified the Hsiung-nu that the Wu-huan were legally under Chinese protection, the Wu-huan refused to comply and killed the Hsiung-nu emissaries. They also seized the women, horses, and oxen belonging to private Hsiung-nu merchants who had come with the envoys for trade.

Enraged, the Hsiung-nu retaliated by attacking the Wu-huan and kidnapping over a thousand Wu-huan women and children for purposes of ransom. Later, when the relatives of those who were kidnapped, numbering over two thousand, went to the Hsiung-nu with animals, furs, and cloths to exchange for the captives, the Hsiung-nu not only kept the ransom, but took them all prisoner as well. This incident shows clearly that official as

184 *HHS* 90, p. 2981. It is surprising that neither the *Shih-chi* nor the *Han shu* include an account of these early relations, for which the *Hou-Han shu* is the sole source. The earliest reference in the *Han shu* is for the rebellion of the Wu-huan in 78 B.C. (*HS* 7, p. 229 [Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 168]). The colonel-protector's office was established sometime after 119 B.C.: *HHS* 90, p. 2981. For a modern discussion of the office, see Ma Ch'ang-shou, *Wu-huan yü Hsien-pi*, p. 130.

well as private relations were maintained after 119 B.C. between the Hsiung-nu and the Wu-huan.[185]

On the other hand, relations between Han and the Wu-huan were much strained. In 78 B.C., for instance, when the news reached China that the Hsiung-nu had been engaged in a war of retaliation against the Wu-huan in Liao-tung, the Han court sent the general Fan Ming-yu to intercept the Hsiung-nu. By the time Fan arrived, however, the Hsiung-nu had already left the area. Because the Wu-huan had recently made a number of raids into Han territory, the court ordered Fan Ming-yu to attack the Wu-huan instead. Han forces killed more than six thousand Wu-huan men and three of their chieftains. Subsequently, the Wu-huan continued to make frequent incursions into the northeast (modern Hopei, Liao-ning), only to be driven away each time by the forces of Fan Ming-yu.[186]

In the early years of the Hsin dynasty (A.D. 9–23), relations between China and the Wu-huan improved considerably. The Hsin court put the Wu-huan in its debt when Chinese envoys to the Hsiung-nu succeeded in negotiating the release of the captured Wu-huan people in A.D. 10, and the improvement in relations led to the incorporation of the Wu-huan into the Chinese military system. Wang Mang had Wu-huan troops stationed in Tai commandery (in the far north of Shansi), but as their loyalty was in question, they were required to send their families to China as hostages. Later, when the Wu-huan soldiers deserted, the Chinese government had all the hostages executed. The Wu-huan then revolted against Han and joined the Hsiung-nu.[187]

The Wu-huan under the tributary system: archeological evidence

In A.D. 49 a new era began in the history of relations beween Han and the Wu-huan. In that year, Kuang-wu-ti succeeded in enticing the Wu-huan into the Han tributary system through generous offers of money and silk. No less than 922 Wu-huan chieftains and leaders from Liao-hsi came to pay homage to the emperor with tribute which included slaves, oxen, horses, bows, and furs of various kinds. The emperor honored them with a state banquet as well as precious gifts. Later in the year, most of the chieftains asked to become inner subjects of the empire, and the emperor conferred honorary titles of prince or marquis on 81 Wu-huan tribal leaders. As inner subjects, these Wu-huan tribes were allowed to settle in the commanderies that stretched along the frontier. The Han court was to provide them with

185 *HS* 94B, p. 3820. See Uchida Gimpu, "Ugan-zoku ni kansuru kenkyū," *Man-Mō shi ronsō*, 4 (1943), 30–31. 186 *HS* 94A, p. 3784; *HHS* 90, p. 2981.
187 *HS* 94B, p. 3822; *HHS* 90, p. 2981.

food and clothing. In return, they were obliged to guard the frontiers against both the Hsiung-nu and the Hsien-pi.

At the same time, the office of colonel-protector of the Wu-huan was reestablished with its headquarters in Ning-ch'eng.[188] As compared with Former Han, the functions of this Later Han office were considerably expanded. It not only took charge of Wu-huan affairs, but was responsible for dealing with the Hsien-pi as well. More specifically, the scope of its authority included the handling of gifts and provisions, arrangements for regular seasonal trade, and taking hostages from those groups who were willing to participate in the Han tributary system.

Recent archeological discoveries have greatly enriched our knowledge of the office of colonel-protector of the Wu-huan in Ning-ch'eng. In 1972 an important Later Han tomb richly decorated with colored mural paintings was excavated in Holingol, Inner Mongolia. The date of the tomb has been determined as between A.D. 145 and 200. Of two paintings that bear directly on the relations between Han and the Wu-huan, one shows scenes of the colonel-protector making a tour of inspection.[189]

The inscription on this painting says: "colonel-protector of the Wu-huan carrying the symbol of imperial authority [*chieh*]." As far as may be determined, there are in the painting 128 persons, 129 horses, and 11 carriages. The colonel-protector is in the middle section of the painting; he is shown riding an official carriage drawn by three horses and surrounded by subordinates and soldiers. The inscriptions give the titles of a number of members of his staff, which are not included in the list of the official establishment of the *Hou-Han chih*.[190] The evidence of the painting may suggest that by the end of the second century, the authority of the colonel-protector may have been greatly expanded in response to the growing needs of the office.

The other painting shows various activities in the city of Ning-ch'eng. In the northwestern section of the city lies the headquarters of the office of the colonel-protector, which actually dominates the entire painting. The official is depicted sitting in the center of the main hall receiving greetings from guests, most of whom are clearly Wu-huan or Hsien-pi. This may be deduced from their reddish-brown clothing and their shaved heads (some with a small tuft on the top); these details agree exactly with the description of both the Wu-huan and Hsien-pi in the literary sources.[191] Some of them are already seated inside the building, while others are lining up

188 In Shang-ku commandery, probably to be placed in modern Kalgan, Hopei. *HHS* 90, p. 2982.

189 See Nei Meng-ku wen-wu kung-tso-tui and Nei Meng-ku po-wu-kuan, "Ho-lin-ko-erh fa-hsien i tso chung-yao ti Tung-Han pi-hua mu," *WW*, 1974.1, 8–23; and Nei Meng-ku tzu-chih-ch'ü po-wu-kuan wen-wu kung-tso-tui, *Ho-lin-ko-erh Han-mu pi-hua* (Peking, 1978).

190 *HHS* (tr.) 28, p. 3626.

191 *HHS* 90, p. 2979.

outside the main entrance, apparently waiting for their turn to pay their respects to the host. In the courtyard a troupe of acrobats is entertaining the guests. The guest in the front appears to be a Wu-huan chieftain who is shown being escorted by two Han officers.

Other buildings shown in the painting include military installations and quarters for civilian officials. In addition, there is the market where the Wu-huan and Hsien-pi came to trade. The entire area is heavily guarded by cavalrymen and by armored footsoldiers with long spears.

It has been firmly established that the occupant of the tomb was a Han frontier official whose career culminated in his appointment as colonel-protector of the Wu-huan. Clearly, the purpose of the mural is to depict major events in his life. However, of all the colonel-protectors of the Wu-huan in the Later Han and Three Kingdoms periods, only seventeen individuals can be identified in extant historical records; and none of these fits exactly with the biographical particulars of the occupant of this tomb.[192]

The importance of these murals as evidence of the relations between Han on the one hand and the Wu-huan and Hsien-pi on the other hand can hardly be overestimated. In a most vivid manner they have not only authenticated the account given in dynastic histories, but more important, they have also revealed many other interesting details. For the first time, for instance, we have some definite idea about the life of the Wu-huan and Hsien-pi as well as the actual operation of the Han tributary system.[193] In another mural the so-called barbarian tent (*hu-chang*) is depicted. As we know, exactly around the time when this tomb was built, the barbarian tent was becoming fashionable in Chinese high society owing to the influence of Ling-ti (r. 168–189), who had first used it in his palace.[194]

The reestablishment of the office of the colonel-protector in Ning-ch'eng proved to be quite successful. For about half a century, a generally peaceful relationship existed between the Han empire and the Wu-huan. Evidence shows that the Wu-huan faithfully kept their part of the agreement. They not only consistently joined in Han resistance to Hsiung-nu and Hsien-pi invasions, but also took part in military campaigns against other rebellions within the empire. In A.D. 165, for instance, 26,000 Wu-huan foot and horse from Yu-chou and Chi-chou were transferred to the south to pacify a large-scale local rebellion of the Man people in Ling-ling (Hunan) and

192 For the suggestion that the occupant of the tomb may have been Kung-ch'i Ch'ou, a colonel-protector of the Wu-huan who was killed in 187, see Chin Wei-no, "Ho-lin-ko-erh Tung-Han pi-hua mu nien-tai ti t'an-so," *WW*, 1974.1, 49. For a different view, see Huang Sheng-chang, "Ho-lin-ko-erh Han mu pi-hua yü li-shih ti-li wen-t'i," *WW*, 1974.1, 43–44.

193 Wu Jung-ts'eng, "Ho-lin-ko-erh Han-mu pi-hua chung fan-ying ti Tung-Han she-hui sheng-huo," *WW*, 1974.1, 24–30.

194 Kai Shan-lin, *Ho-lin-ko-erh Han-mu pi-hua* (Hu-ho-hao-t'e, Inner Mongolia, 1978).

Ts'ang-wu (Kwangsi).[195] In 187, the supreme commander (*t'ai-wei*) Chang Wen also dispatched 3,000 Wu-huan cavalry from Yu-chou to help quell the Liang-chou rebellion.[196]

By the second century A.D., Wu-huan cavalry had earned such a high repute that they had also entered the service of the emperor; several hundred are reported to have been employed as palace guards. Later, in 207, appreciation of their fighting ability led Ts'ao Ts'ao to incorporate Wu-huan cavalrymen formally into his personal army.[197] To guarantee their loyalty, however, Ts'ao Ts'ao again required that the Wu-huan warriors put their families under the care of the Chinese government as hostages. In 217, for example, when the Wu-huan chieftain Lu Hsi and his cavalrymen were stationed in Ch'ih-yang (Shensi), his wife was kept as a hostage in Chin-yang (Shansi).[198] As we have seen, this Chinese practice had been in use at least since the time of Wang Mang. However, excessive use of the Wu-huan as servicemen sowed the seeds of rebellion.

In 187, two former Han local officials from Yü-yang (Hopei), Chang Ch'un and Chang Chü, formed a military alliance with the Wu-huan leaders of Yu-chou and set off a widespread rebellion in the north, affecting Yu-chou, Chi-chou, Ch'ing-chou (Shantung), and Hsü-chou (also in Shantung). From the very beginning, Chang Chü had been quite certain that his plan would succeed because, in his estimation, "the Wu-huan have been repeatedly conscripted in recent years and suffered heavy casualties. Now life has become so unbearable for them that they are ready to revolt."[199]

The cooperation of Chinese and Wu-huan in this rebellion demonstrates how close the links between the two peoples had become since the Wu-huan had been settled within the empire. Later, in 205, when Ts'ao Ts'ao's forces advanced to the northern frontiers, more than 100,000 Chinese households of Yu-chou and Chi-chou fled to the Wu-huan for protection, showing the mutual trust that had gradually developed between the two peoples.[200] This had been achieved by the development of a thriving trade along the border. In the last decade of the second century the prosperity of the barbarian market in Ning-ch'eng made Yu-chou one of the wealthiest regions in the empire. As a result, during the rebellion of the Yellow Turbans, more than a million Chinese migrated to the region from Ch'ing-chou and Hsü-chou. As inner subjects, many of the Wu-huan had also begun to practice agriculture. During the period of Wen-ti of the Wei

195 *HHS* 7, pp. 310, 315; *HHS* 38, p. 1286. 196 *HHS* 73, p. 2353.
197 *HHS* 90, p. 2984. 198 *San-kuo chih* 15 (Wei 15), p. 470 (note), quoting the *Wei-lüeh*.
199 *HHS* 8, pp. 354, 356; *HHS* 73, pp. 2353f.; *HHS* 90, p. 2984; *Hou-Han chi* 25, pp. 5a-5b.
200 *SKC* 1 (Wei 1), pp. 27f; *HHS* 90, p. 2984.

(220–227), for example, the governor of Yen-men (Shansi) requested the exemption of some five hundred Wu-huan households under his jurisdiction from land tax and household levies on the grounds that they had to support men in military service. This instance indicates beyond doubt that these Wu-huan families had become regular "registered households" (*pien-hu*) under Chinese local administration.[201]

The size of the Wu-huan population inside Han China is difficult to estimate. The *Hou-Han shu* reports that early in the reign of Ling-ti (A.D. 168–189) the Wu-huan population in the four northern commanderies of Shang-ku, Liao-hsi, Liao-tung, and Yu Pei-p'ing consisted of some 16,000 settlements (*lo*). According to modern studies, each settlement consisted on the average of about 30 households, each household containing some 7 individuals.[202] Assuming that each unit contained 200 individuals, the Wu-huan population in the above four commanderies would therefore total about 3 million.

This figure is by no means unreasonable in view of the fact that in the last decade of the second century, the Wu-huan of Yu-chou are reported to have captured more than 100,000 Chinese households.[203] Moreover, as is noted above, in 205 more than 100,000 Chinese households fled to the Wu-huan to seek refuge. The total number of individuals in these households would have been of the order of 1 million, and it would be inconceivable that the Wu-huan could have absorbed so many Chinese within the space of two decades unless their own population had been several times larger.

The Hsien-pi and Han

In addition to the Wu-huan settled within the empire, there were many tribes which, throughout the Later Han period, lay beyond the frontier and were in time absorbed by the Hsien-pi. This was the last group to establish relations with Han China. After their defeat at the hands of Mao-tun, the Hsien-pi people fled to a region far beyond the Liao-tung frontier, probably stretching from the eastern section of Inner Mongolia to Manchuria. They were thus separated from China by the Wu-huan throughout the entire Former Han period.

In the early years of Later Han, the Hsien-pi often joined forces with the

201 For the Ning-ch'eng Market, see *HHS* 73, p. 2354. A Han mural painting also mentions the Ning-ch'eng Market; see Kai Shan-lin, *Ho-lin-ko-erh Han-mu pi-hua*, pp. 53–56. For the migration of one million Chinese, see again *HHS* 73, p. 2354. For the exemption of five hundred Wu-huan families, see *SKC* 26 (Wei 26), p. 731.

202 *HHS* 90, p. 2984; Ma Ch'ang-shou, *Wu-huan yü Hsien-pi*, p. 121.

203 *SKC* 1 (Wei 1), p. 28.

Hsiung-nu and Wu-huan in raids on the northeastern Han frontier, especially in Liao-tung. Official relations between Han and the Hsien-pi were first established in A.D. 49, when Ts'ai T'ung, governor of Liao-tung, succeeded in attracting the chieftain of a powerful Hsien-pi group named P'ien-ho to the Han side through generous offers of money and trade. In return, P'ien-ho agreed not only to present tribute to the court as a symbol of this submission, but also to fight both the Hsiung-nu and Wu-huan for China.[204] The Han empire obtained the submission and service of the Hsien-pi at a very high cost. Each time envoys brought sables and horses to the border, calling it tribute, they received imperial gifts of twice the value. Moreover, they were amply rewarded by the Han government on presentation of every decapitated Hsiung-nu head.

Over the years the strength of the Hsiung-nu in this area was gradually reduced to insignificance. In 58, the Hsien-pi under the leadership of P'ien-ho made a major contribution to the peace and stability of the northeastern Han frontiers by reducing the defiant Wu-huan of Ch'ih-shan who had remained outside the empire and made periodic attacks on Shang-ku. Thereafter the Han government made regular annual payments to all the Hsien-pi chieftains east of Tun-huang and Chiu-ch'üan totaling 270,000,000 in cash value. It may be recalled that this was almost three times the amount made over to the southern Hsiung-nu during the same period. For the next three decades, peace generally prevailed in this region.[205]

In 91 the northern Hsiung-nu suffered a major defeat at the hands of Tou Hsien and fled west. There followed a sudden expansion of the Hsien-pi nation, both in terms of territory and of manpower. The Hsien-pi not only moved into all the lands vacated by the Hsiung-nu, but also absorbed the remaining Hsiung-nu populations, reportedly over 100,000 households.[206] With this expansion, the Hsien-pi resumed their incursions along the Han frontiers, at one time penetrating to the Chü-yung Pass. Around 110, the Han government found it necessary to offer them better trade terms. The office of colonel-protector of the Wu-huan in Ning-ch'eng was authorized to extend regular trading privileges to the Hsien-pi in the barbarian market. However, in order to exercise some control over them, the Han court required all the trading tribes to send hostages to China. Two large hostage hostels were built in Ning-ch'eng, one in the north and the other in the south, which reportedly accommodated hostages from 120

204 *HHS* 20, pp. 744f.; *HHS* 90, p. 2985.

205 *HHS* 20, p. 745. Ch'ih-shan may probably be identified with the modern Ch'ih-feng hsien, in Inner Mongolia. For the figure of the annual payments, see *HHS* 90, p. 2986.

206 *HHS* 90, p. 2986. The unit that is specified is the *lo*, which is understood as *hu* (household), with fewer members than those belonging to the *lo* as described above on p. 442.

Hsien-pi tribes. One powerful Hsien-pi chieftain named Yen-li-yang even received the honorary title of king (*wang*), with an official seal and credentials from the court. Since Yen-li-yang and his people were allowed to settle in the vicinity of Ning-ch'eng, it is likely that they became inner subjects of Han China.

But the Han tributary system turned out to be less successful with the Hsien-pi than with other groups; no sooner did they submit than they again revolted. From this time onward, the role of the Hsien-pi on the frontiers was basically reversed. Instead of helping Han to defend its frontiers against invaders, they now became the main threat to the empire. Han was frequently forced to turn to the southern Hsiung-nu and Wu-huan for assistance in order to ward off Hsien-pi border raids.

The power of the Hsien-pi reached its peak in the middle of the second century when a great Hsien-pi steppe confederation was created under the vigorous leadership of T'an-shih-huai.[207] A strong personality and a magnetic leader, T'an-shih-huai seems to have become the chieftain of his own tribe before turning twenty. His feats of arms quickly earned him great respect among his people; he eventually succeeded in uniting all the Hsien-pi tribes into a federation, under his own undisputed leadership. At its height, his power was felt throughout the original Hsien-pi territories, south to Han China, north to the land of the Ting-ling in southern Siberia, east to the Puyŏ (Fu-yü) in Manchuria, and west to the Wu-sun in the Ili Valley. Governing his confederacy on Mao-tun's model, he divided it into three parts: the eastern part, with four subdivisions each under a chieftain, extended from east of Yu Pei-p'ing to Liao-tung; the western part, with five subdivisions, from west of Shang-ku to Tun-huang and Wu-sun; and the central part, with three subdivisions, from west of Yu Pei-p'ing to Shang-ku. Like Mao-tun, T'an-shih-huai himself exercised direct control over the central part from his court in the T'an-han mountains.[208]

Uneasy about the growing threat from the Hsien-pi, Huan-ti (r. A.D. 146–168) offered T'an-shih-huai the honorary title of king, with generous peace terms. T'an-shih-huai rejected these without hesitation. Once unified, the Hsien-pi refused to accept a tributary relationship with Han.[209]

Throughout Ling-ti's reign (A.D. 168–189), the Hsien-pi systematically attacked the frontiers from their three bases. In the period from 168 to 170

207 *HHS* 90, pp. 2989f. See K. H. J. Gardiner and R. R. C. de Crespigny, "Tan-shih-huai and the Hsien-pi tribes of the second century A.D." *Papers on Far Eastern History* (Canberra), 15 (1977), pp. 1–44.

208 This is described as being some 125 kilometers north of Kao-liu; it may be placed in the modern Yang-kao hsien, Shansi.

209 See Ishiguro Tomio, "Senbi yūboku kokka no ryōiki," *Hokudai shigaku*, 4 (1957), 80–91.

alone, they defeated Han forces in a dozen or so confrontations.[210] The secrets of the Hsien-pi's sudden rise as a great military power are nowhere more fully revealed than in a memorial submitted by Ts'ai Yung in 177. This document reads:[211]

Ever since the [northern] Hsiung-nu ran away, the Hsien-pi have become powerful and populous, taking all the lands previously held by the Hsiung-nu and claiming to have 100,000 warriors. . . . Moreover, the passes along the frontier have not been under strict control, and there have been many ways of evading the prohibitions made [against certain types of trade]. As a result, refined metals and wrought iron have come into the possession of the [Hsien-pi] rebels. Han deserters also seek refuge [in the lands of the Hsien-pi] and serve as their advisers. Their weapons are sharper and their horses are faster than those of the [former] Hsiung-nu.

It is clear from this passage that both Chinese iron and manpower contributed substantially to the military and political strength of the Hsien-pi. Their interest in Chinese iron had always been very keen. In 141, for instance, after having rendered military services in Wu-wei (Kansu), a Hsien-pi mercenary band insisted on buying iron with the cash payments they had received from the Chinese government. When officers at the frontier turned down their request on the ground of legal restrictions, they threatened to set fire to the silk stores in the area. Han authorities ultimately yielded.[212] The incident shows that, in addition to contraband trade, the Hsien-pi could at times obtain Chinese iron through official channels. There may also be reason to believe that Han advisors played a key role in the political development of the Hsien-pi, a role similar to that played by Chung-hang Yüeh in the court of the Hsiung-nu in early Han times. T'an-shih-huai's decision to remain outside the Han tributary system may well have been based on the advice of such men.[213]

Fortunately for the Han empire, but unfortunately for the Hsien-pi, T'an-shih-huai died a premature death around 180 at the age of forty-five. Crisis followed his death. Without his strong leadership an internal power struggle ensued, and the Hsien-pi confederacy disintegrated. Half a century later, another great leader named K'o-pi-neng made a heroic effort to reconstitute the confederacy, but his success was as limited as it was ephemeral.[214]

In sharp contrast to the southern Hsiung-nu, the Ch'iang, and the Wu-huan, the Hsien-pi people as a whole remained outside the Chinese empire throughout the Later Han period. They were just as interested in

210 *HHS* 8, pp. 329f. 211 *HHS* 90, p. 2991. 212 *HHS* 48, pp. 1609f.

213 This is suggested by the terms in which they are mentioned in Ts'ai Yung's memorial (*HHS* 90, pp. 2990f.). For Chung-hang Yüeh, see note 27 above; Yü, *Trade and expansion*, p. 37.

214 *HHS* 90, p. 2994; *SKC* 30 (Wei 30), pp. 831–39; *SKC* 26 (Wei 26), p. 727; and see also *Han Chin ch'un-ch'iu*, quoted in the note to *SKC* 35 (Shu 5), p. 925.

Han goods as any other group, but not at the cost of losing their ethnic identity. Certainly, individual Hsien-pi tribes did from time to time participate in the Han tributary system, as is illustrated in the activities at Ning-ch'eng. However, it is most likely that they did so only because they were attracted by the barbarian market located there. In 1959–1960 more than three hundred Hsien-pi tombs of Later Han date were found in Inner Mongolia. Excavations uncovered large quantities of burial objects, including bronze mirrors, lacquerware, pottery that is typical of the Later Han period, and silk embroideries bearing Chinese characters. Very possibly, these Han products found their way into the Hsien-pi tombs through official trade in frontier markets such as that at Ning-ch'eng – if indeed, they did not go through the Ning-ch'eng market itself.[215]

When their needs could not be satisfied by way of trade, official or illicit, the Hsien-pi would resort to force. From the Chinese point of view, therefore, their economic relations with Han were basically definable in terms of trade and plunder, whereas in political terms the relations were characterized alternately by submission and rebellion. The whole story was best told by the memorialist Ying Shao in 185, as follows:[216]

> The Hsien-pi people . . . invade our frontiers so frequently that hardly a year goes by in peace, and it is only when the trading season arrives that they come forward in submission. But in so doing they are only bent on gaining precious Chinese goods; it is not because they respect Chinese power or are grateful for Chinese generosity. As soon as they obtain all they possibly can [from trade], they turn in their tracks to start wreaking damage.

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

In political terms, the immediate results of Chinese penetration in Korea during the Han period were not spectacular.[217] An attempt was made to incorporate parts of the peninsula into the empire, but in the absence of a threat to the home provinces from these parts there was no call to establish a protective line such as existed in the northwest and the north. The real significance of the growth of Han establishments in Korea lay in the long-term cultural results. In time Korea was to act as an agent which brought elements of Chinese culture to Japan. Those elements derived both from the Confucian tradition and the Buddhist religion, which took root in Korea before its passage farther east. In addition, it is possible that some of the skills and crafts (such as paper making) that had evolved in China and

215 See Nei Meng-ku wen-wu kung-tso-tui, "Nei Meng-ku Cha-lai-no-erh ku-mu ch'ün fa-chüeh chien-pao." *KK* 1961.12, p. 673–80. 216 *HHS* 48, p. 1609.

217 For an account of this subject, see K. H. J. Gardiner, *The early history of Korea* (Canberra, 1969); and Ōba Osamu, *Shin Gi Wa Ō* (Tokyo, 1971), pp. 23f.

which were later practiced in Japan may have been taken there by immigrants from the Chinese groups who had been settled in Korea.

Early contacts

Chinese contacts with the peoples of the Korean peninsula are traditionally said to have begun at the time when the kingdom of Chou was established (traditionally 1122 B.C.). It was believed that at that time a refugee member of the royal house of Shang named Chi-tzu had escaped to Korea, where he had introduced some of the characteristics of the Chinese way of life.[218] The tribes whom Chi-tzu or other early Chinese adventurers may have encountered might have been ancestors of peoples later known as the Puyŏ (Fu-yü), around the Sungari River; the Ok-chŏ (Wu-chü), who seem to have been centered around the 40th parallel; or the Wei-mo, who lived further south, toward the center of the peninsula. Little can be said regarding the ethnic affiliations of these peoples or any distinctive features whereby they might be characterized.

A long interval follows the unauthenticated contacts of the second millennium before more can be said of a Chinese presence in Korea. Historical accounts may be said to begin from the fourth century B.C., when the ruler of Yen assumed the title of king (*wang*; in 323 B.C.). Being situated to the northeast of the other six major kingdoms which governed most of China at this time, Yen was the immediate neighbor of the tribes of Manchuria and Korea. As his strength and prestige grew, Yen was able to exert greater pressure to the south, over the kingdom of Ch'i (in the Shantung peninsula). At the same time, active commercial contacts were taking some of the inhabitants of Yen to Korea, where they left large quantities of coin cast in Yen's mints.[219] The terms of trade or the type of articles concerned cannot be ascertained.

A new stage in Chinese relations with Korea began, as might be expected, with the foundation of the Ch'in empire in 221 B.C. Traditionally it is reported that refugees from the oppressive rule of China's new government were finding their way into Korea, but such accounts may derive from a later desire to add force to the denigration of Ch'in's regime. The first name mentioned is that of Wei Man, who is said to have reached Korea after Lu Kuan's unsuccessful rising against the Han empire, staged in the northeast in 195 B.C.[220] With the support of a thousand followers, Wei Man is said to have founded a kingdom at a place known in Chinese as

218 *HHS* 85, p. 2817. 219 See Gardiner, *Early Korea*, p. 8.

220 *HS* 1B, p. 77 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 140f.); *SC* 115, p. 2985 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, p. 258); *HS* 95, p. 2863; *HHS* 85, p. 2809.

Ch'ao-hsien, close to the modern site of P'yŏng-yang. A later account of the foundation of a second kingdom at this time, to the east of Wei Man's domains, should not necessarily be accepted.[221]

During the early decades of the Han empire it evidently suited the officials at Ch'ang-an to leave Wei Man to consolidate his own authority, in the expectation that he would refrain from damaging Chinese interest or invading Chinese territory. Wei Man himself never paid a visit to the court, and it was a mark of the power that he exercised locally that none of the other local chieftains did so. It is possibly in the second century B.C. that a native iron industry was developed in Korea, under the tutelage of Chinese immigrants; hitherto iron wares had been brought in ready-made from China.

A premature and abortive attempt to establish Chinese authority took place in 128 B.C. The Hsiung-nu had been making incursions into Liao-hsi commandery, where they had killed the governor, and into Yü-yang and Yen-men commanderies, where they had succeeded in killing or capturing three thousand persons. To answer this threat, the central government had sent out Wei Ch'ing and another general, and they had taken several thousand captives. The record next informs us that Nan-lü, leader of the Wei-mo tribes, surrendered to the Chinese with no less than 280,000 followers, and the commandery of Ts'ang-hai was established, only to be disbanded two years later.[222] Nothing more is known about Nan-lü or the incident, and it is perhaps surprising that a surrender of so large a body of inhabitants should not have had more permanent effects. It is quite understandable that at that particular juncture the Chinese would not willingly have accepted further involvement; for at just this time they were beginning to grapple with the problems of the Hsiung-nu.

Han expansion

Only when some measure of safety had been assured on the northern frontier and Chinese penetration had been successfully accomplished was it possible for the Han government to mount a further effort in Korea. Two expeditions were sent out in 109 B.C., on the pretext that Wei Man's descendants had been harboring too many Chinese deserters. Despite the failure of the two forces (one by land and one by sea) to act in a coordinated manner, the Chinese eventually forced the local leaders to surrender (in

221 See Gardiner, *Early Korea*, pp. 9f.

222 *HS* 6, p. 169 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 50); *HS* 24B, p. 1157 (Swann, *Food and money*, p. 243); *HHS* 85, p. 2817.

108), and four commanderies were established to administer the area. These were named Hsüan-t'u, Lin-t'un, Chen-p'an, and Lo-lang.[223]

The arrangements did not survive intact for long. The extent of the authority of the provincial officials is subject to doubt, as is the situation of one of the commanderies (Chen-p'an). The policy of retrenchment and withdrawal which had begun at the end of Wu-ti's reign is exemplified in the disbanding of Chen-p'an and Lin-t'un in 82 B.C.[224] By A.D. 1–2 the two surviving commanderies of Hsüan-t'u and Lo-lang comprised, respectively, three and twenty-five counties. One of the counties of Hsüan-t'u was named Kao-kou-li, from which the later name of Korea is derived; Lo-lang included the county of Ch'ao-hsien (Chōsen).[225]

In other areas where the Chinese had been advancing they had created dependent states (*shu-kuo*) with commandants (*tu-wei*) as a means of imposing their authority. On some occasions they had confirmed the titles held by local leaders or kings, and by such confirmation they had both strengthened the prestige of those rulers and secured their loyalty. In Korea the situation was different. There was no compelling need to establish a military organization against a strong potential enemy; nor were there strong tribal units which had evolved their own hierarchies of leaders and officials. It was apparently appropriate to set up units of government of precisely the same type as the regular provincial organs of the empire, in the expectation that the officials of commandery and county could administer their areas with the same degree of efficiency.

How effectively they were able to do so must remain a matter of conjecture, but archeological evidence reveals considerable traces of their existence. In addition to the remains of what was probably the administrative headquarters of Lo-lang, a few tombs have been found that may have been built for senior officials. A further two hundred or more tombs of Han types excavated near P'yŏng-yang may well have been those of Chinese immigrants, whose wealth enabled them to acquire the luxury goods that were being used as funerary furnishings in the home commanderies.[226]

223 *HS* 6, pp. 193f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 90f.); *SC* 115, pp. 2986f. (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, p. 259); *HS* 95, pp. 3864f.

224 *HS* 7, p. 223 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 160); *HS* 28B, pp. 1626–27; *HHS* 85, p. 2817. For the statement that Lin-t'un was disbanded in 75 B.C., see Ōba, *Shin Gi Wa Ō*, p. 32.

225 For the foundation and history of these commanderies and the problems of reconciling the evidence, see Ikeuchi Kō, *Mansen shi kenkyū: Jōsei hen* (Kyoto, 1951), pp. 3–190.

226 For reports on the archeological evidence, see Harada Yoshito and Tazawa Kingo, *Rakurō* (Tokyo, 1930); Koizumi Akio, *Rakurō saikyō tsuka* (Seoul, 1934); Oba Tsunekichi and Kayamoto Kamejirō, *Rakurō Ō Kō bo* (Seoul, 1935); and Umehara Sueji and Fujita Ryōsaku, *Chōsen kobunka sōkan* (Nara, 1946–48). For a study of the Han-style tombs, see Kim Byung-mo, "Aspects of brick and stone tomb construction in China and South Korea: Ch'in to Silla period" (Diss. Univ. of Oxford, 1978).

Relations during Later Han

A somewhat different situation prevailed during Later Han, when the imperial government was unable to sustain a strong position at so great a distance from the court. From the latter part of the first century B.C., the force of Chinese unity and administration had been weakening, and some of the native Hann[227] tribes had been settling in strength in the plains of the south and pressing northward. In A.D. 20–23 they are said to have staged a raid into Lo-lang in which they carried away 1,500 settlers as slaves.[228] Although the Chinese were soon able to reassert their own strength to some extent (A.D. 30), they were by now forced to confirm the authority of some of the local chieftains.[229] Before long, a number of these had made over to the kingdom of Koguryŏ, established around the Yalu River and its tributaries, probably in the first half of the first century A.D.[230] Attacks launched on Chinese installations and officials by the king of Koguryŏ in A.D. 106 forced a withdrawal of Han authority to the west, near the commandery of Liao-tung, but in 132 the Chinese were able to recover some of their lost ground.[231]

It is hardly surprising that in the final decades of the Han period the government's hold on Korea came into question. About 175 a separatist regime was established in the northeast by Kung-sun Tu, son of an official who had served in Hsüan-t'u commandery.[232] His strength and degree of independence were such that he could require acknowledgment from the king of Koguryŏ, and even from the leaders of the Puyŏ tribes farther north. Right at the end of the Han period, Kung-sun Tu's kingdom came under the domination of Ts'ao Ts'ao in his successful bid to found the kingdom of Wei. A new commandery, named Tai-fang, was founded under his authority, with its headquarters near the present city of Seoul.[233]

Meanwhile other developments had been taking place in the southern part of the peninsula. Three confederacies of the Hann peoples had taken shape, under the names of Ma-han, Pien-han, and Ch'en-han. Of these, Ma-han was the largest. It consisted of over fifty minor tribes or units; the other two confederacies included only twelve each.[234] These units were in

227 More strictly, Han; Hann has been adopted in order to avoid confusion with the dynastic title Han. This style has also been adopted to render the name of the pre-Ch'in state, Han, for the same reason; see Chapter 1 above, note 37. The name of the Korean tribes and the pre-Ch'in state are in fact written with the same character, but there is no connection between the two.

228 See Gardiner, *Early Korea*, p. 21, for a citation from the fragmentary *Wei-lüeh*.

229 *HHS* 85, p. 2817.

230 Koguryŏ is the Korean form of the Chinese Kao-kou-li; *HHS* 85, p. 2814; *SKC* 30 (Wei 30), p. 843.

231 *HHS* 4, p. 193; *HHS* 85, p. 2815; *SKC* 30 (Wei 30), p. 844.

232 *HHS* 74B, p. 2418; *SKC* 8 (Wei 8), p. 252; *SKC* 30 (Wei 30), p. 845.

233 *HHS* 74B, p. 2418; *SKC* 30 (Wei 30), p. 851.

234 *SKC* 30 (Wei 30), pp. 849f.

all probability in contact with visitors from the Japanese islands, and the missions that made their way from Kyūshū to the court of Lo-yang in A.D. 57 and 107 may well have passed through the Hann confederacies on their way. On the former occasion Kuang-wu-ti presented a seal to the emissaries. A golden seal appropriately inscribed, which was found in Shiga (Chikuzen) in 1784, has been identified as the object.[235]

THE SOUTH (NAN-YÜEH)

During the Ch'in and Han periods the regions that lay beyond the Ling mountain range and on the eastern seaboard were still relatively unknown to the Chinese.[236] The mountainous and swampy terrain was one to which the northerners were not accustomed, and the subtropical climate was likely to endanger their health and well-being. It is possibly for this reason that Chinese authorities often showed reluctance to launch large-scale expeditions to these areas, which were in general not populated by potential enemies who were likely to harm Chinese interests or property to the north. Of the various peoples who inhabited these parts it was the Yüeh (or Viet) tribes with whom the Ch'in and Han authorities mainly came into contact. They may be divided into two groups: that of the Nan-yüeh of the south, who lived mainly in the area of Kwangtung, Kwangsi, and Vietnam;[237] and that of the Min-yüeh who lay to the northeast, centered on the Min River (modern Fukien). The Chinese regarded them as being highly uncivilized and prone to fight one another.[238]

Chinese expansion

Despite the brevity of its rule, the Ch'in empire had nonetheless advanced to the south and set up the three commanderies of Kuei-lin, Nan-hai, and Hsiang, the exact location of which is difficult to determine precisely.[239] At the end of the Ch'in period, a local chieftain named Chao T'o, whose family had come from Chen-ting in northern China, proclaimed himself

235 For these missions, see *HHS* 1B, p. 84; *HHS* 5, p. 208; *HHS* 85, p. 2821. For the seal, see Wang Chung-shu, "Shuo Tien wang chih yin yü Han wo-nu-kuo wang yin," *KK*, 1959.10, 573–75.

236 For a survey of Chinese penetration to the south, see Herold J. Wiens, *China's march toward the tropics* (Hamden, 1954).

237 "Vietnam" being the Vietnamese pronunciation of the transposition of the Chinese name for the region, Nan-yüeh.

238 *HS* 64A, p. 2777; *HHS* 86, p. 2836. For an anthropological and folkloristic study of the non-Chinese peoples, see Wolfram Eberhard, *Lokalkulturen im alten China*, Vol. I (Leiden, 1942), Vol. II (Peking, 1942).

239 For these problems, see Léonard Aurousseau, "La première conquête chinoise des pays annamites," *BEFEO*, 23 (1923), 137–264.

king, and his position and title were confirmed by Kao-ti in 196. The Han emissary who negotiated this settlement was named Lu Chia, known for his contributions to Chinese political thought.[240]

However, there were signs that the king would not always be content to remain on friendly terms with the Han empire. He assumed the imperial title *ti*, thereby putting himself on a par with the Han emperor, and he expressed resentment at the ban imposed during the reign of Empress Lü (188–180 B.C.) on the export to his area of metal wares and female stock animals.[241] In addition, he threatened the security of his immediate neighbor to the north, the kingdom of Ch'ang-sha. After a second mission led by Lu Chia (180), a modus vivendi was worked out. Chao T'o retained authority in his own territory but gave up the title of *ti;* he would accept his position as a nominal vassal rather than that of an equal with the Han emperor, to whom he would render homage.[242] The success of the negotiations depended partly on the emphasis that was dexterously laid on Chao T'o's Chinese ancestry and the presence of his family's graves in north China.

In 135 Chao T'o successfully appealed to the Han government for help against the attacking forces of Min-yüeh. In the event internal dissension in Min-yüeh brought the attack to a close, but the prompt response of the Han government and the personality of Chuang Chu may have had a telling effect on the king of Nan-yüeh, who agreed to send his son to serve in the court at Ch'ang-an; the prince was not sent as a hostage, but to take his turn in duties at the palace.[243]

From time to time the kings of Nan-yüeh failed to render homage as regularly as had been promised, but the Han court was not anxious to force the issue in view of its commitments elsewhere. In 113 B.C. a positive move was made within Nan-yüeh to change the status of the kingdom; it was hoped that it could be incorporated within the Han empire on the same terms as the other kingdoms that had existed since the foundation of the dynasty. The prime mover behind this suggestion was the queen dowager, herself Chinese and married to that very prince who had served a spell

240 *HS* 43, p. 2113 (Joseph Needham, *Science and civilisation in China* [Cambridge, 1954–], Vol. I, p. 103); *SC* 113, p. 2967 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, p. 239); *HS* 95, p. 3847. Lu Chia's political theories are set out in the *Hsin-yü*. See Chapter 12, p. 709, and Chapter 13, pp. 731f., below.

241 *HS* 95, p. 3851.

242 *SC* 113, p. 2970 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, p. 242); *HS* 95, p. 3853. For the recent excavation of the tomb (dated ca. 128–117 B.C.) of the second *ti*, who succeeded Chao T'o, and new evidence regarding the names of his successors, see Kuang-chou Hsiang-kang Han mu fa-chüeh tui, "Hsi-Han Nan Yüeh wang mu fa-chüeh ch'u-pu pao-kao" (*KK*, 1984.3, pp. 222–30).

243 Chuang Chu, also known as Yen Chu, was the commissioner who had been sent from Ch'ang-an to hold discussions in Nan-yüeh; for his biography, see *HS* 64A, pp. 2775f. The prince's duties were those of a civil rather than a military attendant on the emperor; see A. F. P. Hulsewé, *Remnants*, p. 154 note 187.

of duty in Ch'ang-an. However, the queen dowager's ideas and initiative met with considerable opposition from some of the leaders of Nan-yüeh who had been established in authority for some years and saw no reason why Han interests should be promoted above their own.

The leader of the opposition to the queen's plan was named Lü Chia, and in 112 his supporters took to violence, putting the queen dowager to death. Such provocation could not be left unanswered. A Han expedition was sent south in ships that made their way partly by river. In 111 the two leading generals, Lu Po-te and Yang P'u, succeeded in making their way to P'an-yü (the modern city of Canton) and forcing its surrender. The campaign was concluded by the establishment of no less than nine commanderies to administer the southern territories (Kwangtung, Kwangsi, and northern Vietnam);[244] two of these were situated on Hainan Island, where some agriculture and sericulture were being practiced. It seems that the exotic products of some of these areas, such as white pheasant and white hares, exercised a fascination over the Han court, but it nevertheless became necessary to abandon the two commanderies on Hainan Island, in 82 and 46 B.C., respectively.[245]

Han control: loyalty and rebellion

There is a possibility that at this time the Chinese court was in contact with a kingdom which, it was reported, lay beyond Jih-nan and was reached by sea. According to one passage of the *Han shu*, this land, named Huang-chih, had been sending tribute since the time of Wu-ti, but the only precise reference is for A.D. 2, when a rhinoceros was sent. Identifications of Huang-chih range from Africa to India and the Malay Peninsula; the passage in the *Han shu* may be the earliest reference in Chinese literature to Malaysia. The passage reveals Chinese knowledge of a trade route that depended mainly on the sea but also included one stage of transit by land; it also points out explicitly that the journey was effected in ships that were not Chinese.[246]

244 The commanderies were named Tan-erh, Chu-ai, Nan-hai, Ts'ang-wu, Yü-lin, Ho-p'u, Chiao-chih, Chiu-chen, and Jih-nan: *HS* 95, p. 3859; *HS* 28B, pp. 1628f. For the products of the area and the way of life on Hainan, see *HS* 28B, p. 1670. For an account of the archeological evidence of Han penetration and the styles of graves of both Chinese and Yüeh persons, see Kuang-chou shih wen-wu kuan-li wei-yüan-hui and Kuang-chou shih po-wu-kuan, *Kuang-chou Han-mu* (Peking, 1981).

245 *HS* 96B, p. 3928 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 198); *HHS* 86, pp. 2835f. For the abandonment of the commanderies on Hainan, see *HS* 7, p. 223 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 160); *HS* 9, p. 283 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 310).

246 *HS* 12, p. 352 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 71); *HS* 99A, p. 4077 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 214–15); *HS* 28B, p. 1671; *HHS* 86, p. 2836; Paul Wheatley, *The golden Khersonese: Studies in the historical geography of the Malay Peninsula before A.D. 1500* (Kuala Lumpur, 1961), pp. 8f.

According to one report,[247] despite the establishment of the commanderies and counties in these southern areas, the inhabitants were by no means assimilated to a Chinese way of life in Wang Mang's time. They spoke a number of different languages, and their habits are described as being those of animals rather than of civilized human beings. It was only when Chinese criminals were moved down to live among them that they acquired some of the characteristics of Chinese culture. During the reign of Kuang-wu-ti (A.D. 25–57) they were beginning to practice agriculture and to regulate their lives with rules for marriages and with schools.

In the early years of the Later Han period, a number of local leaders continued to express their loyalty to the Han house, but a serious rebellion broke out in A.D. 40. This was led by two sisters, Cheng Ts'e and Cheng Erh, and evoked a positive response from some sixty-five towns or settlements. It required the resources of one of the most famous and courageous generals of the Later Han period, Ma Yüan, with a force of 10,000 men, to put down. Cheng Ts'e and Cheng Erh were duly executed; they have subsequently found a place in folklore as heroines who strove to win a measure of independence for the Yüeh people. Ma Yüan had previously been involved in the struggles that preceded the reestablishment of the Han dynasty, and he had seen service in the northwest against the Ch'iang tribes. In the campaign against the Cheng sisters he was finally ordered to take supreme command of all the forces, rather than leaving them under the leadership of other generals.[248]

During the remainder of the Han period, relations between the southern peoples and the Han authorities varied considerably. On a number of occasions their leaders are reported as behaving with loyalty, sending tribute to Lo-yang or visiting the capital city to pay homage. However, between A.D. 100 and 184 no less than seven outbreaks of violence took place, often calling for strong defensive action by the Chinese.[249] At times it was necessary to draw away forces from other commanderies, and the wisdom of such measures formed the subject of a major debate at the court in 137. On this occasion, inhabitants who lived beyond the limits of the commanderies had attacked the county of Hsiang-lin (Elephant Forest) in the commandery of Jih-nan and killed some officials. A relieving force of 10,000 men from the neighboring commanderies of Chiao-chih and Chiu-chen had itself mutinied and attacked Chinese installations. The mutineers

247 *HHS* 86, p. 2836.
248 *HHS* 1B, pp. 66f.; *HHS* 86, pp. 2836f. For Ma Yüan, see *HHS* 24, pp. 838f.; and Henri Maspero, "Études d'histoire d'Annam: V. L'expédition de Ma Yuan," *BEFEO*, 18:3 (1918), 11–28.
249 In 100, 116, 137, 144, 157, 178, and 184: *HHS* 86, pp. 2837f.

showed every sign of holding out against loyal Han forces for some time, and the situation was critical.

At a conference convened at Lo-yang to discuss this urgent situation, the great majority of officials, senior and junior alike, advised the dispatch of a large force of 40,000 men from the adjoining regions.[250] This view was challenged by Li Ku, who had himself seen active service, for a number of reasons. In view of the unsettled state of the interior, he thought it would be highly dangerous to denude the commanderies immediately north of Jih-nan of their strength. He believed that, owing to the climate, the casualty rate for a Chinese force would be as high as 40 or 50 percent. He further stressed the difficulties and expense of supply, quoting figures for the resources that would be needed and the logistics of their transport. Rather than sending a large force to settle the troubles by military pressure, he strongly advised the appointment of carefully chosen officials to take up posts in the southern commanderies. He suggested that, so long as fair-minded and generous officials were chosen, they would be able to impose their authority in these areas. At the same time, the population should be temporarily evacuated from certain areas and brought back when the disturbances had died down. Finally, he proposed that native leaders should be recruited and suitably rewarded for eliminating their rivals, so that dissident elements would be destroyed. Li Ku's opinion carried the day, and the officials who were subsequently appointed were successful in restoring some order. But this lasted for only a short time; the next outbreak of violence is reported for 144.[251]

THE SOUTHEAST (MIN-YÜEH)

In the coastal region of modern Fukien, the outcome of Han relations with local leaders was somewhat different from that of those with the tribes of the far south. Shut off from the interior by mountain ranges, the seaboard had given rise to chieftains who were called kings and traced their descent to Kou-chien, the famous king of Yüeh in the pre-imperial period (496–465 B.C.). With the foundation of the Han empire, the kingdoms of Min-yüeh and Tung-hai were established, with Han connivance, in 202 and 192, respectively; Tung-hai was more usually known as Tung-ou. During the rebellion of the seven kings against the imperial government (154 B.C.),[252] the king of Tung-ou had first sided with the king of Wu, leader of the rebels, but later accepted a bribe to kill its king. There

250 *HHS* 86, p. 2838. 251 *HHS* 86, p. 2839. 252 See Chapter 2 above, pp. 141f.

followed considerable enmity between Tung-ou and Min-yüeh and in face of the latter's attack, Tung-ou appealed for help to the Han court (in 138). T'ien Fen, the supreme commander (*t'ai-wei*) advised that the whole area should be abandoned, but on the contrary suggestion of Chuang Chu that Tung-ou deserved help, a force was duly sent. Before it had arrived, Min-yüeh called off its offensive; at the request of its king, the population of Tung-ou was removed into the interior, between the Yangtze and the Huai rivers.[253]

Following the Han government's intervention in 135 to prevent Min-yüeh's attack on Nan-yüeh (see p. 452 above), two kingdoms again came into existence in the area. One was Min-yüeh, now ruled by a puppet king nominated by the Han government; the other was Tung-yüeh, ruled by the younger brother of that king of Min-yüeh who had just been defeated by the Han forces. In 112 Tung-yüeh attacked and killed some isolated Han officials, and the king's adoption of the title *ti* forced the imperial court to take firm action. Expeditions were sent by land and sea, and these ended with the death of the king and the surrender of the population to the Han commanders. Thereafter the government reverted to the suggestion put forward unsuccessfully in 138 and decided to abandon the whole area of Min-yüeh and Tung-yüeh, in view of its mountainous terrain and the unreliability of the inhabitants. According to a terse statement in the histories, "orders were given for the population to be moved to the area between the Yangtze and the Huai rivers, and the land of Tung-yüeh was thereafter evacuated".[254]

This bare statement requires some modification.[255] The total evacuation of the population from the area would hardly have been feasible, any more than it would have been possible for a Han government to set up commanderies and counties in order to administer the area in the regular way of provincial government. There is no evidence to show that by A.D. 1 colonists from elsewhere in China had migrated to Fukien, and it is likely that only one major settlement existed at that time. This was the town or county of Tung-yeh, which may have been founded during Wu-ti's reign or somewhat later. It was situated on the seacoast at the mouth of the Min River, and from A.D. 83 at least it served as a staging post for ocean-going ships carrying tribute from farther south.[256] Toward the end of the second century some additional counties may have been established in the area,

253 *SC* 114, pp. 2979f. (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, pp. 251f.); *HS* 95, pp. 3859f.
254 *SC* 114, p. 2984 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, p. 256); *HS* 95, p. 3863.
255 See Hans Bielenstein, "The Chinese colonization of Fukien until the end of T'ang," in *Studia Serica Bernhard Karlgren dedicata*, ed. Søren Egerod and Else Glahn (Copenhagen, 1959), pp. 98–122.
256 *HHS* 33, p. 1156, as cited by Bielenstein, "The Chinese colonization of Fukien," p. 102.

and these increased in number noticeably from perhaps A.D. 300; presumably some measure of colonization had taken place during the earlier decades, when China had been split into the three kingdoms of Wei, Shu-Han, and Wu.

THE SOUTHWEST

At the foundation of the Han dynasty, the empire was bounded on the west by the commanderies of Lung-hsi, Kuang-han, and Shu. A border, had it been possible to define such a line, would thereafter have turned sharply to the east to take in the commanderies of Pa and Wu-ling and the kingdom of Ch'ang-sha. Outside, and to the west, in the modern provinces of Yunnan and Kweichow, there flowed a number of waterways, including those known today as the Red River and the Black River. Some of these were navigable from the interior and could bring craft downstream to the sea near Haiphong or Canton.

These western regions were inhabited by a large number of tribes, mostly small, of whom the most notable were the Yeh-lang, the Tien, and the Ch'iung-tu. Some of the tribes led a settled agricultural existence; others, whose habitat lay farther in the interior, are described as stock-breeders who led a nomadic life without a defined hierarchy of chieftains.[257] An abortive military expedition sent to these parts by the king of Ch'u between 339 and 328 B.C. had ended with the establishment of Chuang Ch'iao, a Chinese officer, as the independent king of Tien (in modern Yunnan). This kingdom had been isolated by the Ch'in advance to the south in the fourth and third centuries B.C., and with the collapse of the Ch'in empire, the new Han government established itself in territories along the eastern border of Tien that included the commanderies of Pa and Shu.

Han interest in these remote parts was kindled by reports of commercial activity there. The inhabitants of the regions west of Tien were said to have acquired wealth through trade in horses, slaves and long-haired oxen. In 135 B.C. a Chinese official named T'ang Meng reported to Ch'ang-an that goods from Shu – mainly citrus fruit products – were being brought down the Tsang-ko River to Nan-yüeh by way of Yeh-lang.[258] T'ang Meng successfully persuaded the central government to allow him to proceed on an exploratory expedition, which led to the foundation of Chien-wei commandery in that same year (135 B.C.). The inhabitants had been won over

257 *SC* 116, pp. 2991f. (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, p. 290); *HS* 95, pp. 3837f.
258 For T'ang Meng, see *HS* 57B, pp. 2577f.; *HS* 24B, p. 1157 (Swann, *Food and money*, p. 242).

by the lure of Han silks, and conscript troops from Pa and Shu commanderies were set to work opening up communication and transport routes. At the same time Han officials were penetrating somewhat to the north, on the advice of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, and large areas adjoining Shu commandery were brought under Han administration. Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju was himself a native of Shu; he is better known in history for his contribution to Chinese poetry.[259]

There followed an interval during which Chinese advances were suspended, owing to local dissidence, the expense involved in maintaining a Chinese presence, and the conscious decision to concentrate all available effort on the problems of the Hsiung-nu in the north. However, interest in the south was soon rekindled by a report made by Chang Ch'ien on his return from Central Asia about 122.[260] He said that he had observed goods on sale in Bactria which had been taken there by merchants from Shu. His story prompted the central government to send a band of explorers to the southwest to pioneer a route to Shen-tu (India). However, their passage was blocked by the king of Tien, who detained them in K'un-ming for possibly four years.

The real advance of Han authority to the southwest took place after the pacification of Nan-yüeh, by means of forces which had been engaged in that campaign and which included criminals from Pa and Shu. In 111 the commandery of Tsang-ko was founded, in an area later described as being given over to shamanistic cults, and where there was little agriculture and stockbreeding.[261] At the same time, a local chieftain of Yeh-lang, whose loyalty to the throne was thought to be beyond question, was declared to be king of Yeh-lang; as elsewhere, Han authorities were prepared to combine the establishment of direct rule by the normal organs of provincial government with the confirmation of native rulers and their authority. Shortly afterward, Yüeh-sui commandery was founded, as well as two smaller commanderies later incorporated into Shu; and part of Kuang-han was established as the separate commandery of Wu-tu.

When Han authority was brought to bear in Yunnan, to the south, the government again combined its two methods of administration. In addition to the foundation of I-chou commandery (109), the king of Tien was confirmed in his position and with his title. Most fortunately, the evidence

259 For Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, see *SC* 117, pp. 2999f. (Yves Hervouet, *Le chapitre 117 du Che-ki [Biographie de Sseu-ma Siang-jou]; traduction avec notes* [Paris, 1972]); *HS* 57A–57B, pp. 2529f. For his part in the advance to the southwest, see Yves Hervouet, *Un poète du cour sous les Han: Sseu-ma Siang-jou* (Paris, 1964), pp. 69f.

260 The date of his return is in question. It is given as 122 in *SC* 117, p. 2995 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. II, p. 293); and *HS* 95, p. 3841. See Hervouet, *Un poète du cour*, p. 102 note 6; *HS* 61, p. 2689 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 211f.).

261 *HHS* 86, p. 2845.

of the literary sources has recently been confirmed by the discovery of a royal seal, duly inscribed by Chinese authorities for the occasion, and presumably conferred on the king.[262] Other artifacts found at the site of Shih-chai-shan include a remarkable variety of objects. There were ornamental plaques and weapons which derived from a Scythian or Ordos type culture; large bronze drums bore characteristics of the southern cults of Dong-son; and there were a number of objects of regular Chinese styles, known and widely distributed in the north.[263] Tien was later described as being a particularly rich area with natural supplies of salt, precious metals and domestic animals.[264]

Rebellions against Han authority are reported for 86 B.C. and 83 B.C. In the first incident as many as 30,000 tribesmen are said to have taken part; the revolt of 82 B.C. ended, we are told, when 50,000 native inhabitants were put to death or captured, and 100,000 head of domestic animals were taken by the Chinese.[265] Further troubles, which broke out in 28 to 25 B.C., raised the whole question of whether it was right to expend Chinese resources and force Chinese troops to fight arduous campaigns in order to hold these distant areas, or whether they were better abandoned. In the event, Han authority was reimposed by the forceful action of Ch'en Li, who had been appointed governor of Tsang-ko commandery.[266] During Wang Mang's reign (A.D. 9–23) there was considerable unrest in the southwest, with one campaign that lasted for three years and suffered a casualty rate of 70 percent owing to sickness alone. No better success attended a second expedition, which was said to have included 100,000 men, equipped with supplies for twice that number.

During the Later Han period there are reports of unrest and rebellions breaking out among the aboriginal peoples of Nan-chün and Pa. Local chieftains of Tsang-ko commandery were quick to submit tribute to Kuang-wu-ti, apparently sending it by water to P'an-yü (Canton); during Huan-ti's reign (A.D. 146–168) deliberate steps were taken to assimilate the tribes to a Chinese way of life, mainly by way of imparting an education in Chinese mores.[267] In I-chou, Wang Mang's reign was marked by some unrest, but as a result of irrigation projects, large areas

262 See Yün-nan sheng po-wu-kuan, *Yün-nan Chin-ning Shih-chai-shan ku mu-ch'ün fa-chüeh pao-kao* (Peking, 1959), p. 113 and Plate 107.3. For finds from Yunnan, see also Yün-nan sheng po-wu-kuan, ed., *Yün-nan ch'ing t'ung ch'i* (Peking, 1981); and Wang Ning-sheng, *Yün-nan k'ao-ku* (K'un-ming, 1980).

263 See Emma C. Bunker, "The Tien culture and some aspects of its relationship to the Dong-son culture," in *Early Chinese art and its possible influence in the Pacific basin*, ed. Noel Barnard (Taiwan, 1974), pp. 291–328; and Magdalene von Dewall, "Decorative concepts and stylistic principles in the bronze art of Tien," in ibid., pp. 329–72. 264 *HHS* 86, p. 2846.

265 *HS* 7, p. 223 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 160) gives somewhat different figures from those in *HS* 95, p. 3843. 266 *HS* 95, p. 3845. 267 *HHS* 86, pp. 2840f., 2845.

of uncultivated land were brought under the plough. Further outbreaks of rebellion are reported for A.D. 42–45, and then for 176. In the meantime, comparatively large numbers of tribes came over to the Chinese, in A.D. 51 and 69, and during Ming-ti's reign (A.D. 57–75) the new commandery of Yung-ch'ang with six subordinate counties was founded in the western part of I-chou.[268] By agreement, the inhabitants were allowed to render tax in the form of textiles and salt; some of the tribes outside the commandery sent their tribute in the form of rhinoceros, elephants, and jewelry, and received titles from the Han court in exchange (94–120). Tribute from others included local musicians and entertainers, some of whom claimed to have come from the eastern Mediterranean world.[269]

In A.D. 114, no less than 167,620 tribesmen from west of Yüeh-sui commandery submitted to Han civil officials, but a rebellion against high taxation which broke out two years later evoked a response in Yung-ch'ang, I-chou, and Pa, with over twenty counties suffering damage from the ensuing violence. Its suppression was followed by a period in which the civil administration is said to have improved the cultural standards of the inhabitants.[270] Farther north, during Ming-ti's reign an enterprising official had had tribute of a somewhat unusual type presented in Lo-yang, from beyond the confines of Shu. In accordance with an old tradition whereby music and dances of non-Chinese origin were performed at the imperial court, he had conveyed the text of some native loyalist songs which praised the beneficent rule and civilization of the Han empire.[271] Thereafter we read alternatively of rebellions (107, 123, 156, and 159) or their suppression, protestations of loyalty or the presentation of rarities (108, 161).

CONTACTS WITH THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

An incident that is reported for A.D. 166 has sometimes given rise to misapprehension. According to the *Hou-Han shu*,[272] in that year An-tun, king of Ta Ch'in, sent emissaries from beyond Jih-nan to offer presents of ivory, rhinoceros horn, and tortoise shell to the Han court, thus marking

268 *HHS* 86, p. 2849 gives the exact figure of the tribesmen as (a) 2,770 households, 17,659 individuals for A.D. 51, and (b) 51,890 households, 553,711 individuals for A.D. 69. The precise nature of these figures argues that they were taken from a real count and that they cannot be an approximation. For the proportion of six or ten individuals to one household, see Chapter 3 above, p. 272. 269 *HHS* 86, p. 2851. 270 *HHS* 86, pp. 2853f.

271 See *HHS* 86, pp. 2856f. for the text both in Chinese and another language.

272 *HHS* 7, p. 318; *HHS* 88, pp. 2919–20 (Needham, *SCC*, Vol. I, p. 197). For the whole subject of contacts with the Roman world, see Yü, *Trade and expansion*, pp. 153f.; J. Innes Miller, *The spice trade of the Roman empire, 29 B.C. to A.D. 641* (Oxford, 1969); and A. F. P. Hulsewé, "Quelques considérations sur la commerce de la soie au temps de la dynastie des Han," in *Mélanges de Sinologie offerts à Monsieur P. Demiéville* (Paris, 1974), Vol. II, pp. 117–36.

the start of communications between China and Ta Ch'in. The latter name may be identified as denoting the eastern part of the Roman world in the Mediterranean; An-tun may be identified as the emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. The author of the *Hou-Han shu* sees fit to comment that this traditional account may be subject to error, in view of the absence of rarities on the manifest.

The incident should in no case be taken as evidence of the start of regular diplomatic relations between a ruler of the Mediterranean world and a Chinese emperor. For some centuries travelers had been passing between the two worlds by land, and the report for 166 may be the earliest recorded instance of Roman traders making their way to the east and doing so by sea. Shortly after the time of Chang Ch'ien, Chinese envoys had been sent to prospect in the west, and it was as a result of their reports that the Chinese first heard talk of Arsacid Persia and other places farther west.[273] As yet no direct contacts are recorded between traders of the Roman world and Chinese; according to the *Hou-Han shu*, this was due to the determination of the Parthians to prevent such contacts from taking place. The Parthians are likewise said to have prevented Kan Ying from proceeding on his journey to Ta Ch'in, where he had been sent in A.D. 97.[274] But by whatever means it was conducted, the trade left material evidence in the form of Chinese silks abandoned in Central Asia or possibly at destinations in the Mediterranean world. In addition, there are some traces of Roman objects, such as ornaments and precious metals, which reached the east.[275]

There is considerable evidence to show that silk was an article of luxury apparel in Rome in the early days of the empire, and it has sometimes been suggested that payment for these imports wrought considerable damage to the Roman economy.[276] There is also reason to show that some Han statesmen were aware of the potential value of exporting surplus silk to the confederacies of Central Asia or customers who lay beyond.[277] Implications of these suggestions have been modified by a scholar working principally from Western materials, from the point of view of the Western rather than the Eastern side. Dr. Manfred Rashke argues[278] that the initiative for the conveyance of silk from China to the states of Central Asia came from the

273 *HS* 96A, p. 3890 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p.117); *HS* 61, p. 2689 (Hulsewé, *CICA*, p. 211); Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 41f.

274 *HHS* 88, p. 2918 (Needham, *SCC*, Vol. I, p. 196); and see *HHS* 88, pp. 2910, 2920.

275 For a summary of the finds of silk, see Rashke, "New studies in Roman commerce," pp. 625, 713f. notes 219, 220. For Roman precious goods at Oc-Eo, see L. Boulnois, *The silk road*, trans. Dennis Chamberlin (London, 1966) p. 71; Needham, *SCC*, Vol. I, p. 179.

276 See Yü, *Trade and expansion*, p. 159; Loewe, "Spices and silk: Aspects of world trade in the first seven centuries of the Christian era," *JRAS*, 1971.2, 173.

277 For the statements in the *Yen-t'ieh lun*, see Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, p. 97.

278 Rashke, "New studies in Roman commerce."

Asiatic confederacies rather than from a Chinese desire to promote an export trade. Possession of silk was a mark of superior status which distinguished the greater from the lesser leaders and increased their prestige. He suggests that silk may have been brought to the West at a much earlier date than is warranted by the Chinese sources, even reaching the banks of the Danube by the sixth century B.C.

Rashke also points out that the strength of the Hsiung-nu empire should not be underestimated. The Hsiung-nu had been familiar with iron wares which derived from workings west of the Pamir; they practiced some agriculture, and they employed Chinese craftsmen whom they had captured or who had deserted to them. Backed by considerable strength and a greater degree of organization than is often credited, the Hsiung-nu had been able to force the early Han emperors to accede to their wishes or demands, under an agreement which is described in face-saving terms in China as harmonious kinship (*ho-ch'in*). There is no real evidence to show that China acquired wealth from exporting silk at this stage, and there is a notable absence of Roman coins or manufactures found in bulk in China. Rashke argues that it cannot be assumed that a silk trade was controlled by middlemen such as the Parthians, and that there is no real reason to believe that imports of Chinese silk drained away wealth from Rome.

CHAPTER 7

THE STRUCTURE AND PRACTICE OF GOVERNMENT

THE CIVIL SERVICE

The system of imperial government evolved during the Ch'in and Han periods was marked by the division of responsibilities, the duplication of some offices, and the organization of civil servants into hierarchies. By these means it was hoped to avoid undue concentration of power in any particular individual and to attract a sufficient number of recruits ro staff the agencies of the empire.[1]

Several edicts reflect the need to find suitable men in sufficient numbers for the purpose. In theory it was open to all men to join the service, but at times restrictions were placed on merchants and shamans, and a minimum qualification of wealth was sometimes applied. In addition, a ban on holding office could somerimes be imposed as a punishment or as a means of preventing the growth of political coteries.[2] For long the inhabitants of kingdoms were not entitled to take office in the central government for fear that they might use such opportunities to start disloyal or separatisr movemenrs in the capiral city.

A career in the service allowed a man to rise from a humble position as a clerk to become a senior director of an office and thereafter a statesman responsible for framing policies and major decisions of state. One and the same man could thus be required during his career to implement the commands of his superiors, ro propose policies for consideration, and to act

1 For a short account of the central government, see Wang Yü-ch'üan, "An outline of the central government of the Former Han dynasty," *HJAS*, 12 (1949), 134–87. For a more comprehensive study embracing central, provincial, and local administration and other institutions, see Hans Bielenstein, *The bureaucracy of Han times* (Cambridge, 1980). Recent Chinese studies include books by T'ao Hsi-sheng and Shen Chü-ch'en, *Ch'in Han cheng-chih chih-tu* (Shanghai, 1936; rpt. Taipei, 1967); and Tseng Chin-sheng, *Chung-kuo Ch'in Han cheng-chih chih-tu shih* (Taipei, 1969). For local government, see Yen Keng-wang, *Chung-kuo ti-fang hsing-cheng chih-tu shih*, Part I. *Ch'in Han ti-fang hsing-cheng chih-tu* (Taipei, 1961).

2 For restrictions on merchants, see Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, p. 132. For discrimination against shamans and their families, see *Hou-Han shu* 83, p. 2769. For qualifications of wealth, see *HS* 5, p. 152 (Homer H. Dubs, *The History of the Former Han dynasty* [Baltimore, 1938–55], Vol. I, p. 329); and Tseng, *Chung-kuo Ch'in Han cheng-chih chih-tu shih*, p. 291. For the exclusion of individuals from office, see A. F. P. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han law* (Leiden, 1955), pp. 135f.

as a judicial authority. Normally candidates for office were not expected to possess specialist skills, but there was an exception under Yüan-ti (r. 49–33 B.C.), who called for men versed in the understanding of *yin* and *yang* and their visitations, and it was not unknown for experts in mathematics or those experienced in industrial enterprises to rise speedily.[3]

The principal method of recruiting civil servants was by the recommendation of provincial officials or of senior ministers in the central government. They were required to find men of suitable qualities who combined intelligence and integrity; and at times they were ordered to seek men who would be capable of criticizing the conduct of affairs. If an official sent up candidates who proved to be inadequate he could be punished; and from A.D. 102 a quota system was instituted to ensure that men were provided regularly from all parts of the empire, in proportion to their population. But at least one contemporary writer (Wang Fu; ca. A.D. 90–165) complained that recommendations in fact depended on favoritism rather than merit. In addition, candidates were sometimes found by direct summons from the throne. If an individual had won a reputation locally, the emperor or senior officials would order him to present himself at the capital for consideration and appointment. There were also times when senior officials could nominate their clients or heirs directly; and other times when offices became available for purchase.[4]

Men sent to the capital city were sometimes subject to examination, being required to answer questions of topical interest. Some of the replies may have been preserved in the *Han shu*.[5] By the time of Ch'eng-ti (r. 33–7 B.C.), but not necessarily regularly, candidates were graded in one of three classes and appointed to posts correspondingly. But perhaps the greatest encouragement of learning and education came with the establishment of the imperial academy (*T'ai-hsüeh*), from the time of Wu-ti (r. 141–87 B.C.). In this institution there was a complement of men of learning who were cognizant of the practices of state and versed in the precedents of government. From 124 B.C. students were placed in the

3 *Han shu* 9, p. 284 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 312); Nancy Lee Swann, *Food and money in ancient China* (Princeton, 1950), p. 272. For the recruitment of specialists in military skills, see *HS* 10, p. 326 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 411); *HS* 45, pp. 2185–86.

4 See *Ch'ien-fu lun* 2 (7), pp. 62f. Probably the most convenient assembly of references to methods of recruitment will be found in *Hsi Han hui-yao* 44, 45; and *Tung Han hui-yao* 26. These chapters include citations from *Shih-chi*, *Han shu*, and *Hou-Han shu*. See also T'ao and Shen, *Ch'in Han cheng-chih chih-tu*, pp. 193f.; Tseng, *Chung-kuo Ch'in Han cheng-chih chih-tu shih*, pp. 289f.; and Rafe de Crespigny, "The recruitment system of the imperial bureaucracy of the late Han," *Chung-chi Journal*, 6:1 (1966), 67–78. For the sale of offices, see Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 141f.

5 The three famous memorials of Tung Chung-shu (*HS* 56, pp. 2495f., 2506f., and 2513f.) may possibly have originated in this way. For the tests imposed on candidates, see A. F. P. Hulsewé, "The Shuo-wen dictionary as a source for ancient Chinese law," in *Studia Serica Bernhard Karlgren dedicata*, ed. Søren Egerod and Else Glahn (Copenhagen, 1959), pp. 239–58.

charge of the academicians for instruction. At first, the students were numbered by the tens, but there was a conspicuous increase, allegedly to three thousand in the time of Ch'eng-ti.

The academy flourished in Later Han, admitting foreigners (Hsiung-nu) as well as Chinese. Its object was to train men for office; and it became an instrument for fostering the Chinese traditional way of public life, which comprised a respect for the achievements of the past, a close association between scholarship and success in the service, and the claim that imperial government rested on the principles of Confucius rather than those of Shen Pu-hai or Shang Yang.[6]

Candidates recommended from the provinces or trained at the imperial academy were probably kept at the capital as courtiers or attendants at the palace. In this capacity they were acknowledged to be capable of giving advice and partaking in government, and in due course they would be posted to appointments. Their careers were made or unmade by promotion, transfer, or demotion; sometimes their advancement was regular, sometimes it was by extraordinary steps. Officials were subject to annual reports on their proficiency and performance; and although these were sometimes little more than a formalized certificate that a man held the necessary qualifications, a senior official's report on his subordinate, coupled with the record of his length of service, was all-important in determining a man's career. There were various types of appointment, ranging from temporary or conjoint to that of full office; at the most senior levels men were appointed provisionally for one year, pending confirmation to permanent tenure. Careers were ended by death, resignation (on the grounds of age or ill health), or dismissal (for prolonged illness, incompetence, or crime).

The scheme of government which is described in the *Han shu*, and which may bear a closer resemblance to theory than practice, sets out the grades of each official in terms of stipend.[7] This was given as the number of bushels (*shih*) of grain, and there was a maximum of twenty (later reduced to eighteen) grades, running from ten thousand bushels at the top to one hundred bushels at the lowest rung of the ladder. In practice, stipends were paid partly in kind and partly in cash. There was also a formal symbol of an official's degree of dignity in the type of seal whereby his documents were authenticated, and the color of the ribbon or sash which he was entitled to wear. Sick leave was allowed, together with regular days of rest from official duties (one day in six); and although the principle of three years' mourning leave was sometimes recognized, it was not always granted. By

6 For the academy, see Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 138f.

7 *HS* 19A, p. 724f. carries entries for some officials listed in order of seniority, with notes on their duties and other details.

special favor, senior officials who retired honorably in old age could be entitled to all or a third part of their stipends as a pension.

The *Han shu* proudly gives the number of officials of the central and provincial governments at 120,285. This figure may be applied to the end of the Former Han period, presumably without including those who served at the level of county or lower. There is in any event no evidence to show how regularly all the posts that are listed in the *Han shu* were filled (e.g., there was no certain continuity even for the senior posts whose incumbents are named in a special table of the *Han shu*).[8]

THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

In the course of their careers, junior civil servants thus rose to become senior ministers of state who controlled imperial policy. But after about a century of Han rule, a major change began. The seat of power was removed from the regular senior organs of government into the hands of a private secretariat. The regular organs comprised those offices which lay under the general direction of the chancellor, and these were later known as the outer court; but although these were usually staffed with career civil servants, toward the end of Wu-ti's reign (141–87 B.C.) many of the principal decisions that affected dynastic history were taken by prominent members of what has been termed the inner court. This term described the men who formed the emperor's entourage, having received titles of distinction and being obliged to attend on their sovereign. These men could be either civil or military figures.[9]

While the chancellor was the most senior member of the regular establishment of officials, leadership of the inner court came to be held by the individual who had been nominated *ta ssu-ma*, or marshal of state, and his powers of administration came to depend on the *shang-shu*, or secretariat. This agency had started as a subordinate office in one of the regular organs of the government; and when a marshal was given instructions to assume leadership of the secretariat, his actual powers of government came to outstrip those of the chancellor. At times during Former Han the secretar-

8 *HS* 19A, p. 743. In some texts the figure of officials is given as 130,285: see Wang, "Outline of government," pp. 136–37. *HS* 19B gives the names of the holders of the senior posts of the central government in chronological order, with brief notes on the circumstances in which their appointments started or ended.

9 For the distinction between these two types of official or adviser, see Wang, "Outline of government," pp. 166f. The view that the emperor sometimes came under the control of the senior members of the so-called "Inner Court" has been contested by Bielenstein (*Bureaucracy*, pp. 154–55), who argues that the use of the terms "Inner Court" and "Outer Court" is misleading.

iat was staffed by eunuchs, and by the middle of Later Han it had grown large enough to control six bureaus (*ts'ao*).

In subsequent centuries, after the Han period, the secretariat was to become one of the principal organs of established government. In its turn it was to yield significant power to a new series of unofficial organs, in the same way as the regular organs had lost their powers during Han. The reasons for the replacement of formal organs by a privately controlled secretariat are not far to seek; it freed an emperor or empress dowager from the official procedures and formalities that could hamper the arbitrary conduct of state business; and at times of crisis or civil war, when the established organs of the civil service might have been disrupted or rendered powerless, a small, mobile secretariat could be essential for dynastic survival.

The importance of the secretariat was recognized as early as 46 B.C. in a telling remark made by the statesman Hsiao Wang-chih;[10] but a significant feature of Han government lies in the formal retention of the regular organs and the way in which their senior posts were usually filled. This arrangement served to avert criticism, for none could protest that the regular, traditional offices had been abolished. And even after the secretariat had acquired its powers, there were a number of occasions when senior dignitaries such as the chancellor were able to advance constructive criticism and suggestions for the government of China.

The following account of the basic structure of the central government is based on the theoretical description of offices that is given in the *Han shu*.[11] It thus refers to the practice of the Former Han period, whose principal parts were inherited from Ch'in; and indeed some of the offices and titles of the Han empire can be traced back to the kingdoms that preceded the unification of 221 B.C. Unfortunately, the *Han shu*'s description is more ideal than real, and it is not possible to trace how far all the institutions named there had a bearing on government. This difficulty applies with particular force to the lesser and more specialized offices which were subordinated to the major organs.

The government was formed of two main levels; that of the three senior

10 *HS* 78, p. 3284; *HS* 93, p. 3727. For Hsiao Wang-chih, see Chapter 2 above, p. 192.

11 See *HS* 19A; and Édouard Chavannes, *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-Ma Ts'ien* (Paris, 1895–1905; rpt. Paris, 1969), Vol. II, pp. 513–33. For fuller details of the establishment of these posts and of changes of nomenclature, see Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, Chapter 2. In these pages, officials and posts are referred to by the title that was in use for the greater part of the Han period and that can therefore be regarded as being regular; e.g., references are to the title *t'ai-ch'ang*, rather than *feng-ch'ang*, which was used to denote the official with the same duties and establishment from Hui-ti's reign (195–188) until 144 B.C.

statesmen (*san kung*), and that of the nine ministers (*chiu-ch'ing*). Accompanying the latter and at a slightly lower level were a few other independent offices; in addition, there were the senior military appointments of generals and the offices of the provincial government. The three senior statesmen, whose duties may be described as consultative and supervisory, were responsible for general guidance; the nine ministers were charged with specific tasks within defined spheres of administration. At both levels there was some degree of overlap between different offices.

The collective body of the three senior statesmen was formed of the chancellor (*ch'eng-hsiang*), the imperial counsellor (*yü-shih ta-fu*), and the supreme commander (*t'ai-wei*). Of these three, the chancellor was the most senior, being described as the assistant of the emperor who was responsible for the multitudinous affairs of state. As "head of the administration" he acted as the channel for submitting reports to the emperor, and could thus exercise a power of selection among the proposals submitted from junior officials. Sometimes two chancellors were appointed concurrently, as a means of dividing the supreme responsibility.[12] The post of imperial counsellor acted as a further check to ambitious chancellors. Like the chancellor, the imperial counsellor was concerned in the promulgation and distribution of orders to lower-ranking officials; and the imperial counsellor bore specific responsibility for the performance of the civil service. At times he was even responsible for examining the chancellor's conduct of affairs, and as keeper of the records of government he was able to check that proposed measures did not conflict with the established provisions of state.

While these two posts were filled throughout the Ch'in and Han periods, that of supreme commander was held far less regularly, and was suspended in 139 B.C.[13] In theory, the supreme commander was the commander-in-chief of the army and ranked with the other two senior statesmen. In practice, direction of the government rested with the chancellor and the imperial counsellor, and the conduct of military affairs was delegated to general officers who ranked at a lower level.

There was considerable variety in the type of responsibility reposed in the nine ministers of state. The duties of the superintendent of ceremonial (*t'ai-ch'ang*) concerned the religious cults of state; his subordinates were specialists in matters such as astrology, divination, and music. From one of these offices, which kept written records of the emperor's activities, there was eventually to spring the state's responsibility for the preparation of histories; and the superintendent of ceremonial was also responsible for the receipt and examination of candidates presented for office.

12 *HS* 19A, p. 724. Two chancellors were appointed during the reigns of Hui-ti and Empress Lü; of the two, the chancellor of the left was the senior. 13 *HS* 19A, p. 725.

The superintendent of the palace (*kuang-lu-hsün*) was in charge of the large variety of counsellors and courtiers who were awaiting appointment and who could in the meantime be requested to give advice or serve on a special commission. The superintendent of the guards (*wei-wei*) provided security guards for the imperial palace; and the superintendent of transport (*t'ai-p'u*; also called grand servant or grand coachman) maintained the transport for imperial use – coaches, horses, and their equipages. In addition, at a time when pasture for horses was difficult to find, he controlled thirty-six grounds set aside for imperial use for this purpose to the north and west of the city of Ch'ang-an.

The superintendent of trials (*t'ing-wei*) was in general responsible for legal processes, and cases were sent up from the provinces for his adjudication.[14] The superintendent of state visits (*ta hung-lu*) received foreign dignitaries, providing interpreters as needed and arranging for their accommodation in suitable residences; in addition, he took part in some of the state sacrifices. The superintendent of the imperial clan (*tsung-cheng*) kept registers of that family with a view to maintaining the correct order of precedence; this was the single senior office of state to be held regularly by a member of the imperial family of Liu, and the incumbent was occasionally required to summon to Ch'ang-an a member of the family who was to assume the supreme care of mankind as emperor.[15]

The last two of the nine ministers were concerned with finance and the economy. The office of the superintendent of agriculture (*ta ssu-nung*) received the major revenues (the land tax and poll tax, paid either in cash or in kind), and with these resources the office paid official stipends and supplied the army with its needs. From about 120 B.C., the office took on responsibility for certain economic measures, such as operating the state's monopolies on salt and iron, and controlling or balancing prices and transport. The superintendent of the lesser treasury (*shao-fu*) collected minor dues, such as those levied on the produce of hills and lakes; his office maintained the emperor's establishment, and for this purpose controlled a number of workshops and agencies for medicine, music, etc. One of its subordinate agencies was the secretariat.[16]

There were many other minor offices or agencies under the direction of

14 See A. F. P. Hulsewé, "The function of the commandant of justice during the Han period," (forthcoming).

15 See *HS* 68, p. 2947, for the procedure whereby the future Hsüan-ti (r. 74–49 B.C.) was invited to succeed as emperor.

16 For the distinction between the functions of these two financial organs, see Chapter 10 below, pp. 591f.; Katō Shigeshi, *Shina keizaishi kōshō* (Tokyo, 1952–53), Chapter 4; and Michael Loewe, "Attempts at economic co-ordination during the Western Han dynasty," in Stuart R. Schram ed., *The scope of state power in China* (London and Hong Kong, 1985), pp. 237–66.

the three senior statesmen and the nine ministers of state. While the chancellor effectively controlled the administration, there were some three hundred subordinates in the agencies which served him, but these were later reduced to thirty. For some of the nine ministers the structure was relatively small and simple. The superintendent of trials, for example, was assisted by a controller (*cheng*), two inspectors (*chien*) of the left and right, and two moderators (*p'ing*) of the left and right. In other cases far more divisions were involved. The superintendent of transport, for example, commanded a total of fourteen agencies staffed with their own directors (*ling*), assistants (*ch'eng*), inspectors, and chiefs (*chang*). There was a considerable overlap between some of these subordinate offices; some of the agencies of the chancellor, for example, were responsible for the selection of candidates for office, for the administration of criminal law, and for the iron and salt industries; and these matters all came within the jurisdiction of some of the nine ministers.

Other independent offices, which ranked slightly below the nine ministers of state, included the senior and junior tutors of the heir apparent (*t'ai-tzu t'ai-fu, shao-fu*); the court architect (*chiang-tso ta-chiang*); the supervisors (*chan-shih*) of the households of the empress, heir apparent, and empress dowager; the commandant of the dependent states (*shu-kuo tu-wei*); and the superintendent of waterways and parks (*shui-heng tu-wei*). As with the nine ministers, these officers were supported by assistants and subordinate offices (the court architect controlled seven offices, each with its own directors and assistants, such as those of the masonry store or the timber of the Eastern Park).

PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

As the Ch'in and Han governments strove to consolidate the power of the center and to extend it into newly penetrated areas, so were the organs of provincial and local government developed. Institutions evolved as administrative problems arose and to maintain a smooth and effective devolution of authority. But eventually the Han governments, no less than some of their successors, proved incapable of delegating sufficient power to render provincial government viable while simultaneously retaining adequate command of local loyalties to prevent separatism.

There were large areas of the Ch'in and Han empires over which the writ of imperial government did not run fully; for there were simply not enough officials to allow provincial or local government to be pervasive. In some regions, for example those of the valley of the Yellow River, administration

was comparatively advanced and intensive, for it was backed by a long tradition of government in the pre-imperial age; the land was productive and the population was accustomed to being organized. Elsewhere, for example in the northwest or southwest, provincial units were much larger, extending over a scattered and sparse population; here the official posts were somewhat isolated, possibly surrounded by peoples who were not assimilated to the Chinese way of life. Officials posted to such areas were engaged in extending the scope of their activities – the collection of revenue, the conscription of manpower, and the maintenance of law and order – as widely as they could.[17]

By far the greater part of the Ch'in and Han population lived in villages and worked on the land; and it was thus with officials at the lowest level of administration, those of the counties and districts, that most Chinese came into contact. But before considering those units, it is necessary to examine the larger units of which they formed the constituent members.

Major units of provincial government

The territories of the Ch'in and Han empires were administered either as commanderies (*chün*) or kingdoms (*kuo*), and the term "province" is used here to cover units of both types. Commanderies had made their appearance several centuries previously in some of the pre-imperial states, where they were areas which governors had been appointed to administer. By adopting commanderies as the standard form of government throughout the empire, to the exclusion of fiefs committed to particular families, the Ch'in empire had made a radical break with the traditions of the past.[18] At the foundation of the Han empire, the territory which lay immediately under the central government's control was likewise organized into 15 commanderies, surrounded as these were by the kingdoms.

By the end of Former Han the number of commanderies had risen to 83, owing to the takeover of territory from the kingdoms, the division of larger into smaller commanderies, and penetration into new territories in Central Asia and elsewhere. According to the next complete list of

17 For details of provincial and local administration, see Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, Chapter 3; and Yen, *Chung-kuo ti-fang hsing-cheng chih-tu shih*, Vol. I. *Ch'in Han ti-fang hsing-cheng chih-tu*. In another study, Professor Bielenstein shows how the administrative control of part of southeast China advanced during the different stages of expansion and colonization (see Hans Bielenstein, "The Chinese colonization of Fukien until the end of T'ang," in *Studia Serica Bernhard Karlgren dedicata*, ed. Søren Egerod and Else Glahn [Copenhagen, 1959], pp. 98–122). For the isolation of Chinese provincial officials in remote and distant regions, see K. H. J. Gardiner, *The early history of Korea* (Canberra, 1969), pp. 18–24. 18 See Chapter 1 above, pp. 25f., 54f.

TABLE 11

Population counts for select commanderies

Commandery	Registered households	Registered individuals
Ying-ch'uan (one of the smallest commanderies in area)	432,491	2,210,973
Tsang-ko (one of the largest commanderies in area)	24,219	153,360
Tun-huang (in the extreme northwest)	11,200	38,335
Ho-tung (in the center)	236,896	962,912

administrative units that is available, in A.D. 140 the empire included 80 commanderies.[19] The size of the commanderies varied very considerably, both in terms of area and of population. The count for A.D. 1–2 gives the figures for a few sample units, as in Table 11.

Special arrangements were made in the metropolitan area. Under Ch'in this had been directed by the metropolitan superintendent (*nei-shih*), and his office had been included in the central government on the same level as the court architect, slightly below the level of the nine ministers of state. The Han governments followed the example of Ch'in, but in time this large and important region was divided into two (ca. 135 B.C.), and later (104 B.C.) into three units. The governors bore special titles and remained members of the central government; but in other respects the administration of these units was essentially the same as that of the commanderies.[20]

Reference has been made to the establishment of kingdoms at the outset of the Han dynasty; to their transfer to members of the imperial family of Liu; and to the process whereby their powers and territories were reduced.[21] The kingdoms were conceived in territorial terms and were transmitted

19 *HS* 28A, 28B, and *HHS* (tr.) 19–23 present lists of the commanderies and kingdoms of which the empire was composed in A.D. 2 and 140, respectively. Under each unit there are entered the figures for the registered households and individuals, and the names of the minor units (e.g., counties) in the commandery or kingdom. Notes describe the features of the locality, such as special products and the existence of agencies set up to supervise particular tasks or types of production. The figures given in Table 11 are derived from these sources.

20 The metropolitan area was divided into two regions either in 155 or 135. In 104 the titles *tso p'ing-i* (metropolitan superintendent of the left) and *yu fu-feng* (metropolitan superintendent of the right) were adopted for the senior officials who governed the two areas. Also in 104, the western unit, which included the city of Ch'ang-an, was subdivided into two units, of which one was placed under the jurisdiction of an official termed *ching-chao yin* (governor of the capital). See *HS* 19A, p. 736; *HS* 28A, pp. 1543–46; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 87–88.

21 See Chapter 2 above, pp. 123f., 139f.

from father to son on a hereditary basis; and it was perhaps in this respect that there lay the fundamental difference between the kingdoms and the commanderies, whose governors were appointed for their individual tenure by the central government. The kings were obliged to attend at the emperor's court annually to render homage, and to give an account of the government of their kingdoms; and they were not entitled to call out troops without receiving explicit authorization from the emperor.

At first the kings enjoyed some measure of independence, being entitled to appoint most of their own officials, who were organized as a small-scale replica of the imperial government itself. Thus, each of the kings was served by his own chancellor and metropolitan superintendent. However, the independent powers of the kings were strictly limited in 145 B.C., when the central government assumed the right to make all such senior appointments. It could thereby plant in the kingdoms strong and loyal statesmen who would supervise and control the kings' activities.[22] In addition to taking over parts of the kings' territories and splitting larger kingdoms into smaller ones, the central government sometimes changed the order of succession in the kingdoms. By this means it could ensure the accession of a man or boy who would be related to the reigning emperor more closely than the heir apparent whom he was replacing in the kingdom.

The kingdoms survived as institutions until the Later Han period, and twenty figure in the list of administrative units of A.D. 140; but from about 100 B.C. the distinction between kingdoms and commanderies was losing most of its practical significance. Despite some differences – for example in the titles of the officials serving in the two types of unit, or possibly the methods of taxation – the kingdoms had become integral parts of the empire no less than the commanderies. And there had been a fundamental change in the proportions of the situation. In 200 B.C. the kings had corporately administered wider territories than the fifteen governors of the commanderies; by ca. 100 B.C., far more land was governed as commanderies than as kingdoms. But kingdoms survived until the end of Han as a matter of administrative convenience; they were a means of providing gifts or honors for members of the imperial family, or of establishing dissident members of that family at a safe distance from the capital.

During Ch'in the administration of the commanderies had been split among three senior officials whose function corresponded partly with those of the three senior statesmen of the central government. Of these, the post of governor (*shou*; renamed *t'ai-shou* in 148 B.C.), who had final responsibil-

22 *HS* 19A, p 741. For the system of the kingdoms and the duties of the kings, see Kamada Shigeo, *Shin Kan seiji seido no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1962), Part II.

ity for the ordered administration of the commandery, survived throughout the Han period; the commandant (*wei*, later *tu-wei*) who bore specifically military duties was retained in Former Han but abolished in Later Han, except in certain key areas; the third office, that of inspector (*chien*), was not retained during Han. The governor and commandant ranked highly in the service, as officials entitled to stipends of 2,000 and 2,000 (nominal) bushels (*shih*). They were supported by a host of assistants and agencies concerned with various aspects of provincial government, such as finance and taxation; registration of the land and the population; conscription of men to serve as laborers or soldiers; the maintenance of communications and the care of granaries; administration of the Han laws and the conduct of justice; internal security against bandits and defense against alien invaders.[23]

The governor's offices were situated in one of the constituent counties of the commandery (see pp. 475f. below). Boundaries were not necessarily demarcated between commanderies, kingdoms, and their neighbors, but on occasion they were formed by a river or mountain range, or in some northern border regions, by the line of defense. In other commanderies that had been founded on the periphery, in the northeast, northwest, west and southwest, the lands subject to the governors merged with those open to penetration by Hsiung-nu, Ch'iang, or the tribes who inhabited the modern Vietnam or Korea.

Han penetration into these far-flung areas did not always result in the foundation of commanderies. For example, during the process of expansion to the northwest, there was a time when some of the subordinate units (counties) may have been founded without the superior units which coordinated and controlled their work. In addition, the government sometimes recognized the existence of dependent states; that is, regions where Chinese officials were posted but in which the inhabitants were not subject to all the usual obligations of tax and service that bound those of the commanderies and kingdoms. The first dependent states were recognized about 121 B.C.; in A.D. 140 the list of administrative units of the empire carried the names of six.[24]

The governors of the commanderies reported regularly to the central government; the chancellor assessed their performance, and the imperial counsellor concerned himself with the conduct and discipline of their subor-

23 The bare statement of the establishment of these officials will be found in *HS* 19A, pp. 741–42. For details, see Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 93f.

24 For the various means of administering the areas near the border, see Michael Loewe, *Records of Han administration* (Cambridge, 1967), Vol. I, pp. 61f. For the dependent states of A.D. 140, see *HHS* (tr.) 23, pp. 3514–15, 3521, 3530.

dinates. By way of innovation, in 106 B.C. intensive measures were taken to strengthen the central government's powers of supervision. The empire was divided into thirteen regions, and regional inspectors (*tz'u-shih*) were appointed to each one.[25] A fourteenth region was formed in 89 B.C. These officials were of considerably lower grade than the governors, whose work and efforts they were charged to observe. The inspectors worked independently and directly to the center; their duties were to look for cases of corruption, inefficiency, injustice, or oppression in both the commanderies and the kingdoms of the region.

As yet these large divisions were no more than areas within which inspectors operated, and they are not to be regarded as administrative units. But from Later Han or even earlier, the regional inspectors were developing powers that were by far to exceed their original charter. They were assuming the rights of recommending candidates for office, of pronouncing judicial decisions, and of taking military command, hitherto powers vested in the provincial governors. In time the inspectors were backed by a permanent office staffed by men whom they had themselves chosen. The growing independence of the inspectors became most marked in the border areas, and by the last few decades of Later Han their exercise of civil, financial, and military authority had become sufficiently strong to disrupt the central government's control of provincial administration.

Constituent units of the provinces

The commanderies and kingdoms comprised a total of 1,577 minor units in A.D. 2 and 1,179 in A.D. 140.[26] These included *i*, estates or lands made over for the support of the female relatives of the emperor, and *tao*, marches whose alien inhabitants were not fully assimilated to Chinese authority. Little is known of the organization of these units, which are of much less significance than the other two types of subunit that formed the standard. These were the *hsien*, or counties, and *hou*, marquisates or nobilities.

Long before the unification of 221 B.C., counties had been founded in much the same way as the commanderies, as areas whose administration had been entrusted to appointed officials by one of the royal governments of the seven kingdoms. With the passage of time it had become regular usage for the counties to form subordinate units of the commanderies. The counties of Ch'in and Han were basically areas of about the same size as English counties, including at least one walled town. Unfortunately, popu-

25 *HS* 19A, pp. 737, 741; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, p. 90.

26 The figures of 1,587 and 1,180 are given in *HS* 19A, p. 743; *HS* 28B, pp. 1639–40; *HHS* (tr.) 23, p. 3533. For those given above, see Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, p. 185, notes 77, 78.

lation figures are available only for a few highly abnormal examples, which were singled out for their exceptional size and importance as centers of administration, commerce, or industry. Thus in A.D. 2, Ch'ang-an, Wan, and Ch'eng-tu counties had registered populations of about 200,000 individuals, of whom about a third were probably housed in the cities of those names.[27] But most of the counties were probably far smaller, for there were two basic grades for the magistrates (*hsien-ling; hsien-chang*) which varied according to the size of the population, and the figure of 10,000 households formed the criterion of distinction. Magistrates were appointed by the central government, and they were supported by a number of minor officials and agencies.[28]

The marquisates, which are sometimes termed nobilities, derived from the highest of the orders of honors.[29] They had existed in Ch'in, probably in small numbers and without the administrative duties and landed rights conferred by the Han emperors. As part of his settlement after the civil war, Liu Pang granted marquisates to almost 150 of the men who had loyally supported him in battle and were awaiting their reward. Together with titles and rank, they received orders to proceed to specified areas; they had the right to collect taxation there from a specified number of households and to retain some proportion of the tax as their own emoluments. Being transmitted from father to son, the marquisates combined a means of rewarding service with one of extending the administration; they could also be used as a political instrument.[30]

The great majority of the marquisates did not survive for long, being brought to an end naturally by the absence of a successor or by the crimes of the holder of the title. They rarely outlasted the fourth generation. The importance and wealth of the marquisates differed widely, as may be seen in the variation of the number of households which they were entitled to tax. Many of these amounted to a few thousand; some were ten thousand or more. At the other end of the scale, some of the marquises could raise revenue from no more than a few hundred households. The income of a

27 *HS* 28A, pp. 1543, 1563, 1598. The available figures are presented together in Utsunomiya Kiyoyoshi, *Kandai shakai keizaishi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1955), p. 116. See also Chapter 10 below, pp. 574f. 28 *HS* 19A, p. 742; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 99f.

29 See Chapter 2 above, pp. 126f., 157f.

30 For the initial settlement and the conferment of marquisates, see *HS* 1B, p. 54 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 103–04). *HS* 19A, p. 740, lists the titles of the assistants attached to the marquises. *HS* 16, pp. 527f., records the origin of and development of the institution, and individual entries in *HS* 16, 17 show the history of each marquisate since its bestowal on meritorious servants of the state between 201 and 13 B.C. An edict of 179 (*HS* 4, p. 115 [Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 240]) ordered the marquises to proceed to their kingdoms and leave Ch'ang-an (see also Yoshinami Takashi, *Shin Kan teikokushi kenkyū* [Tokyo, 1978], p. 203).

TABLE 12

Marquisates of Former Han[31]

	To sons of kings	To meritorious officials	To relations of imperial consorts
Kao-ti	3	137	—
Hui-ti	—	3	—
Lü-hou	3	12	10
Wen-ti	14	10	3
Ching-ti	7	18	4
Wu-ti	178	75	9
Chao-ti	11	8	6
Hsüan-ti	63	11	20
Yüan-ti	48	1	2
Ch'eng-ti	43	5	10
Ai-ti	9	—	13
P'ing-ti	27	—	22

marquis who could tax one thousand households was taken as the criterion of comparison with sizable incomes raised by other means.[32]

At the outset of the Han empire there was a severe shortage of trained civil servants who could be commissioned to govern the provinces, and the conferment of marquisates on successful officers was a means of bringing law and order to bear on behalf of the government. For it was clearly in the interest of the marquises to maintain civil discipline in their areas so as to facilitate the collection of taxes.

The institution of marquisates with their supporting stewards and other servants survived until the end of the Han empire, and it should in no sense be regarded as a reversion to a feudal system which is sometimes postulated to have existed in the pre-imperial age. On several occasions marquisates were re-created (after suspension) or terminated at will, either to give status to a new set of imperial supporters or to discontinue an association with the dynastic traditions of the past. The institution was used as a means of weakening the powers of the kings (see pp. 472f. above); of settling subjugated enemy leaders and wooing their loyalties; and of

31 Table 12 shows the number of marquisates conferred during the Former Han period. The figures are taken from the actual entries that form the main body of *HS* chapters 15–18: those for the sons of kings are from chapters 15A and 15B; those for meritorious officials are from 16 and 17; those for relations of imperial consorts are from 18. These figures differ somewhat from the counts that are given irregularly at various points in those chapters (e.g., *HS* 16, p. 617).

32 For marquisates with a small number of households (five hundred or less), see, e.g., *HS* 16, p. 624; *HS* 17, p. 644. For those of ten thousand or more, see, e.g., *HS* 16, p. 531; *HS* 18, p. 691. For the standard income of dues from one thousand households and its equivalent, see *HS* 91, p. 3686 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 432–33).

providing honors and elevated status for members of an empress dowager's family. In addition, the marquisates existed as minor units, comparable with the estates, marches, and counties, under the general authority of the governors of commanderies or chancellors of kingdoms.[33]

Local government

The great majority of the inhabitants of the Ch'in and Han empires lived on the land in villages. It was to the officials of the counties, or possibly the commanderies, that they conveyed their tax, either as coin or as grain, brought to the designated place of collection by human labor, by ox-cart, or by boat. Similarly, it was to the officials of those levels that they took themselves for registration and call-up to serve as laborers of the state or in the armed forces. Below the counties were the districts (*hsiang*), consisting of groups of hamlets (*li*). Here too were some officials, appointed in this case by the authorities of the commandery or county and responsible for keeping law and order in the countryside.

In addition, those men who had acquired the respect and authority of natural leaders in village life were chosen by the inhabitants to hold certain titles and with them the burden of leading the people to the fulfillment of their duties and the accomplishment of the tasks set by the government – roadmaking, building, or transport by water or land.[34] Thus, at the lowest level of administration, the govetnment depended on the cooperation of semi-official leaders who were well versed in local conditions. This was balanced by the ban that prevented men from serving as officials at the commandery or county level in their own native areas, and which was presumably intended as a precaution against organized disaffection.

Special agencies

During Former Han a number of agencies were established to manage the specialized work of production. The commissioners took over the sources of

33 For the use of the marquisates as a means of dividing the powers of the kings, see *HS* 15A, p. 427; the individual entries in *HS* 15A, 15B; and Chapter 2 above, p. 158. For marquisates bestowed by way of settling foreign leaders or securing their loyalties, see, e.g.: *HS* 17, pp. 639f.; *HS* 8, p. 266 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 249); *HS* 96B, p. 3910 (A. F. P. Hulsewé, *China in Central Asia: The early stage 125 B.C.–A.D. 23, with an introduction by* M. A. N. *Loewe* [Leiden, 1979], pp. 161, 162 note 495). *HS* 18, pp. 677f. lists the marquisates conferred on members of the families of imperial consorts. For the termination of over one hundred marquisates, apparently for arbitrary purposes or political motives in 112 B.C., see *HS* 6, p. 187 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 80f., 126f.).

34 For the establishment of the districts and lower units, and the arrangements to appoint men to positions therein, see *HS* 1A, p. 33 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 75); *HS* 19A, p. 742; and Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 103f.

raw materials and employed state labor for production and distribution; in some cases they took the opportunity to raise extra revenue. The most conspicuous of these specialist offices were the thirty-four salt agencies and forty-eight iron agencies. In addition there were agencies concerned with waterworks, manufactures, textiles, and fruit orchards. Under Former Han, most of these agencies were responsible to officers in the central government such as the superintendent of agriculture or the superintendent of the lesser treasury.[35] In a slightly different capacity, special commissioners were also posted by the central government to control the passage of persons and goods at the frontier and to manage the state-sponsored farms or colonies of the northwest.

THE ARMED FORCES

Conscripts, volunteers, and convicts formed the Chinese armies, and of these the conscripts were the greater and most important element. Except for those who were distinguished by certain orders of honor, all able-bodied males between the ages of twenty-three and fifty-six, or for a short period between twenty and fifty-six, were required to serve in the army for two years and were liable to recall in times of emergency. Some, but not many, of the men may have been able to engage and pay for substitutes to serve on their behalf. But the great majority spent one year in training and one year on duty, at the capital city, in the standing forces that kept order in the provinces, or in the frontier garrisons. While most served as infantrymen, a few may have acted as cavalrymen in the north, or in a water-borne force in the south.[36] Given the prevailing shortage of precise information, the total number of men available for call-up may be estimated variously at between 300,000 and 1,000,000; but it is certain that no Han government was ever able to draft, train, and supply the full potential.

The Ch'in empire had set the example of drafting convicts; under Han this was probably carried out rarely rather than regularly, but there is some

35 Notes included in *HS* 28 indicate the existence of special commissioners, e.g.: *HS* 28A, p. 1569, for iron; *HS* 28B, pp. 1616, 1617, for salt; *HS* 28A, p. 1603, for citrus fruits. For special officials posted to control passage through strong points at the frontier, or to supervise agricultural work at the state-sponsored colonies, see Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, pp. 61, 70, 107. For other specialist agencies, see Chapter 10 below, pp. 581f. For the operation and management of the salt and iron mines, see Chapter 10 below, pp. 602f.; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 44, 95; and Hans Bielenstein, *The restoration of the Han dynasty*, Vol. IV, *BMFEA*, 51 (1979), 153f., and maps 11–12.

36 For the recruitment of servicemen, see Swann, *Food and money*, p. 50; Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 80 note 2; *HS* 5, p. 141 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 312); *HS* 23, p. 1090 (Hulsewé, *Remnants*, p. 329); Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, pp. 77f., 162f. During the Ch'in period, men were enrolled for service in their fifteenth year (see Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law: An annotated translation of the Ch'in legal and administrative rules of the 3rd century B.C. discovered in Yün-meng Prefecture, Hu-pei Province in 1975* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985), p. 11.

evidence to show that convicts, and convicts who had benefitted from an amnesty, were serving on the northwest frontier. There were also some volunteers. These were the sons of families of superior status (that is, not slaves or convicts) who may have been enrolled in the cavalry.[37] Men from the dependent states are known to have served in a number of campaigns, but it is not certain whether this was on a voluntary or obligatory basis. A final source of troops was found in the non-Chinese communities around the Taklamakan desert, particularly during the campaigns fought in Central Asia in Later Han.[38]

There was no fixed complement of general officers (*chiang-chün*) in the Ch'in or Han forces. As the need arose, officers were designated to take command of troops or to lead an expedition, and the titles that they were given were sometimes associated with the immediate objective of the campaign (e.g., the title *tu-Liao chiang-chün*, general of the trans-Liao command). More frequently generals who held responsibility of a more routine nature were entitled general "of the left" or "of the right." To avoid the danger of a coup d'état, several generals were usually appointed to lead forces in a campaign, which sometimes suffered from the absence of a coordinating commander. Occasionally a general was ordered to place himself and his forces at the disposal of another officer; such cases usually gave rise to jealousies and quarrels.[39]

The generals bore a rank and a stipend that were equivalent to or next below that of the nine ministers of state. Their appointments were held directly from the emperor, and they bore complete responsibility for the conduct of a campaign, the discipline of officers and men, and their performance in battle. Within their own headquarters they could exercise powers of life and death, and civil servants required a special permit to gain admission. For the failure of a campaign, a general faced very severe penalties.[40]

For minor tasks and smaller forces, a colonel (*hsiao-wei*) was appointed to command. When a campaign was ordered, arrangements were made for the senior officers to assemble forces from different areas or sources; and in many cases the senior officials of the commanderies, the governors or the commandants, took a leading part.

37 For the formation of an armed force drawn from various sources, see *HS* 8, p. 260 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 241); Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, p. 78.

38 See, e.g., *HHS* 47, pp. 1577, 1580, 1590.

39 For the regular general officers, see *HS* 19A, p. 726. For the *tu-Liao* general, see *HS* 7, p. 230 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 171). For the difficulties that accompanied the absence of a unified command, see *HS* 95, pp. 3865f., for one of the campaigns fought in Korea during Wu-ti's reign.

40 For the leadership given by general officers, see Michael Loewe, "The campaigns of Han Wu-ti," in *Chinese ways in warfare*, ed. Frank A. Kierman, Jr., and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), pp. 87f.

Han forces were organized as a standing garrison at the capital city, where they were divided into several units under separate commanders; as a task force on the march; or as a permanent frontier defense. Thanks to the survival of fragments of administrative documents, disproportionately more is known of the last than of the first two categories. As elsewhere in the empire, the commandants were responsible not only for the call-up and training of the conscripts, but also for commanding them in action. In the four commanderies of the northwest the forces were organized as companies, each of which comprised some five platoons; the platoons included a number of sections. These were the smallest units of the army, consisting of one officer and perhaps four, or exceptionally ten, men. Companies and platoons were designated by name, and sections by name or number. While the platoon headquarters took command of the sections during action, for administrative purposes the sections reported directly to company headquarters.[41]

Sections or individual servicemen were detailed for a variety of tasks. Their main work, as a defensive force, was to man the watchtowers of the wall, observing enemy activity, signaling information along the line, and resisting intruders with bow and arrow, spear and shield. In addition, they maintained regular patrols for reconnaissance. Officers and men were put at the disposal of the commandants of the passes to check the egress and ingress of travelers. Groups of conscripts, brought, for example, from the Huai River valley, were sometimes detailed to work the farms set up by the government to supply the forces locally. Squads were put on the unending work of maintaining the plaster and brickwork of the wall and its outposts; and men were dispatched as runners to carry official orders and reports up and down the line.[42]

The efficiency of these garrisons was kept at a high professional standard. Officers arbitrated disputes between servicemen, who could plead for the recovery of debts. In the orderly rooms of the companies meticulous records were kept of the daily work on which men were engaged; of the preparation, dispatch, and receipt of official mail; of the regular tests in archery to which officers were subject; and of the inspectors' reports on the state of efficiency of sites and equipment. Accurate timekeeping was a feature of service life, as may be seen, for example, in the records of schedules for the delivery of mail; of the observation of routine signals; and of the passage of individuals through points of control. Similarly, careful accounts were kept of the official expenditure and distribution of supplies; of payments made

41 For the organization and order of battle of these units, see Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, pp. 74f., Vol. II, pp. 384f.

42 For the tasks that devolved on the men stationed on the defense lines, see Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, pp. 39f., 99f.

for officers' stipends or for the purchase of stores such as glue, grease, or cloth; of the rations of grain and salt to which men and their families were entitled; of the receipt of equipment and clothing by the men; and of the equipment, weapons, and horses consigned to the care of the units.[43]

THE PRACTICE OF GOVERNMENT

Methods and procedures

Major decisions of state policy depended theoretically on the choice and authority of the emperor, or on that of the empress dowager. In practice such decisions could hardly ever be taken without the advice of senior officials, which they submitted either orally at audiences, or in written form as memorials. Part of the power of the chancellor lay in his opportunity to scrutinize reports sent from the provinces and to reject them out of hand or select them for further attention. Toward the end of Former Han this power had passed into the hands of the director of the secretariat (*shang-shu ling*), who used to open one of the two copies of the reports that were presented.[44] On a number of occasions, decisions were preceded by consultation, as senior ministers would be ordered to deliberate and formulate proposals; such occasions concerned military, civil, or fiscal matters, or the observance of state cults.

Orders were published in a variety of forms, ranging from deeds of investiture or appointment to edicts, statutes, and ordinances. Edicts often took the form of summarizing the proposals made by an official and appending the imperial formula "approved"; instructions were included in the edict for its transmission, through the hands of the chancellor and the imperial counsellor, right down to those who would be immediately responsible for taking action. Statutes and ordinances were sometimes distinguished as members of a series, such as ordinance A, ordinance B. Very often these would specify punishments for infringing regulations. Alternatively, they would lay down the correct procedures, such as for the submission of annual returns from the provinces; for the conduct of tests for entrants to the civil service; for the execution of judicial sentences; or for the application of precedents in trials.[45]

Cumulative collections of orders, whether in the form of edicts, statutes, or ordinances, were probably distributed to provincial offices for their reference. Surviving fragments show something of the form and style in

43 For reports of this nature, see fragments assembled in Loewe, *Records*, Vol. II.
44 See *HS* 74, p. 3135.
45 For the Han law codes, see Chapter 9 below, pp. 525f.; and Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 26f.

which the documents were drawn up. Some reports were written as a single document; others took the form of ledgers to which entries were appended day by day; and some returns were made out in duplicate.[46]

There were two regular series of documents of state without which the work of government could not proceed: the calendar and the registers of population and land. There were ideological as well as practical reasons why the Chinese governments should interest themselves in the regulation of the calendar; major changes were introduced in 104 B.C. and A.D. 85, and a minor rearrangement took place under Wang Mang. For the immediate purposes of administration it was essential to ensure that officials were working on the same version of the luni-solar calculation; otherwise their procedures would run awry, as they would not know which months were long (thirty days) and which were short (twenty-nine days), or at which point of every second or third year an intercalary month had to be inserted. Only then, for example, could the issue of stores or the payment of stipends be determined accurately. Various forms of tabulation were used for the copies of the calendar that were painstakingly made out by clerks at all levels of government; and the information given on those twelve or thirteen strips of wood included notes of the moon's phases and guidance for the regulation of the agricultural year.[47]

The registers of population and land were necessary for the collection of tax and the conscription of men for service. They were compiled annually at a low level of government, whose returns were submitted to superior authorities, and eventually total figures were drawn up for the commanderies and kingdoms of the empire. Two of these counts, for A.D. 2 and 140, have happily been incorporated in summarized form in the Standard Histories. They give the numbers of the households and individuals registered in each one of the provinces; unfortunately only total figures are given for the land, in terms of the complete area measured, the extent that was potentially arable, and the extent that was actually under the plow. When the counts were made, at the level of local officials, they probably included far greater detail, such as the age, sex, and status of all members of the household, so that their obligations for poll tax and service could be deter-

46 For surviving parts of books of edicts, see Loewe, *Records*, Vol. II, p. pp. 227f., 245f. For the different types of wood stationery, see Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, pp. 28f. For the form of edicts, see Ōba Osamu, *Shin Kan hōseishi no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1982), pp. 201–84. For the preparation of documents, see Chapter 2 above, pp. 154f.

47 For surviving parts of calendars and their form, see Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, pp. 36f., 138 note 53, Vol. II, pp. 308f. For the implications of mathematics and astronomy, see Nathan Sivin, "Cosmos and computation in early Chinese mathematical astronomy," *TP*, 55:1–3 (1969), 1–73. For the connection with cosmology, see Michael Loewe, *Crisis and conflict in Han China* (London, 1974), p. 303; and Michael Loewe, *Chinese ideas of life and death: Faith, myth and reason in the Han period* (206 *B.C.–A.D.* 220) (London, 1982), pp. 61f.

mined; and the quality of the land under survey, so that the tax could be assessed at the appropriate rate.[48]

The accuracy of these counts depended directly on the honesty and efficiency of the officials. As the success of provincial government was sometimes measured in terms of the increase in the population, there could be some temptation to exaggerate those figures; alternatively, officials who wished to falsify the tax returns might prefer to underestimate the extent of the land and the number of the inhabitants so that they could retain part of the tax actually levied for their own use. In the outer provinces, particularly those of mountain, forest, or swamp, it would be impossible for officials to penetrate deeply enough to seek out all the inhabitants, some of whom may well have tried to conceal themselves from the recruiting officers or the tax gatherers. Similarly, administrative officials were withdrawn, or prevented from carrying out their routine business, if unassimilated tribesmen or marauders penetrated a commandery. Because such events had occurred in the north shortly before A.D. 140, the figures for the persons actually registered in that year in some of the northern provinces are markedly lower than the corresponding figures for A.D. 2.

With these provisos, the figures may be accepted not as those of a full census and land survey, but as those of persons and fields actually seen by the reporting officials; and by themselves the figures give no indication of the great variation in density among the population or the different intensity of the farming effort in different parts of the empire. The total figures, as given, are presented in Table 13.[49]

Rewards, punishments, and the laws

The government of Ch'in and Han rested on principles enunciated by Shang Yang and Han Fei: that meritorious service must be encouraged by rewards, and infringement of the law must be punished. In addition, from time to time the Han emperors distributed liberal bounties as a means of demonstrating the beneficent and philanthropic nature of imperial sovereignty. So edicts announced the gift of meat and spirits, of gold or silk to different sections of the country. In times of distress a remission of tax would be ordered as a measure of relief; and amnesties were at times given with such frequency that they provoked contemporary criticism of their loss

48 For an analysis of the counts given for the population of China between A.D. 2 and 742, see Hans Bielenstein, "The census of China during the period 2–742 A.D.," *BMFEA*, 19 (1947), 125–63. Examples of some of the counts given for commanderies and counties are cited on pp. 472, 476, and in note 27 above.

49 These figures are found in *HS* 28B, p. 1640; and *HHS* (tr.) 23, p. 3533. Figures given here in parentheses are the corrections in millions as calculated by Bielenstein in his "Census," p. 128.

TABLE 13

Population and land subject to registration

	A.D. 2	A.D. 140
Households	12,233,062 (12.4)	9,698,630 (9.5)
Individuals	59,594,978 (57.7)	49,150,220 (48)
(Average size of households)	(4.7)	(5.1)
Demarcated land[50]	145,136,405 *ch'ing*	—
Land used for residences, roads, or consisting of hill, wood, or bush	102,528,589 *ch'ing*	—
Potentially arable land	32,290,947 *ch'ing*	—
Specified as arable land	8,270,536 *ch'ing*	—

of purpose.[51] But the principal reward of state consisted of the orders of honor or aristocratic rank, of which there were seventeen under Ch'in and twenty under Han. The orders formed a mark of status, conferring hierarchical rank within the Chinese community as well as certain material privileges. Only the highest, that of the marquisate, was held on a hereditary basis; and the privileges of the other nineteen orders were considerably less valuable.

The orders were conferred by imperial edict, often on state occasions such as the accession of an emperor, the nomination of an empress or an heir apparent, or else in connection with natural disasters.[52] On such occasions one order would be conferred, either throughout the empire or locally, or upon certain named groups of the population; and as a general distribution to all males would have been counter-productive, it is almost

50 The unit whereby land was measured was the *ch'ing* (= 100 *mou*), whose equivalent is estimated, from 155 B.C. onward, at 11.39 English acres (see Swann, *Food and money*, p. 364; and Wu Ch'eng-lo, *Chung-kuo tu-liang-heng shih* [Shanghai, 1937], pp. 61, 114). For the range of meanings of the term *tse*, rendered here as "bush," see Derk Bodde, "Marshes in *Mencius* and elsewhere: A lexicographical note," in his *Essays on Chinese civilization*, ed. Charles Le Blanc and Dorothy Borei (Princeton, 1981), pp. 416–25. The total of the last three items given in this table, where the quality or use of the land is specified, is 143,090,062. Figures for the land area at various dates in Later Han are available from other sources (Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. IV, pp. 146f.).

51 For a list of occasions when amnesties were bestowed, see Michael Loewe, "The orders of aristocratic rank of Han China," *TP*, 48:1–3 (1960), 165–71. For edicts conferring material bounties or remission of taxation, see, e.g., *HS* 2, pp. 85f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 174f.); *HS* 4, p. 174 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 58f.); *HS* 8, p. 257 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 234). For amnesties, see Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 225f. For the criticism that these were being proclaimed too frequently to be effective, see *HS* 81, p. 3333 (Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, p. 159); *HHS* 49, pp. 1642f.; *Ch'ien-fu lun* 4 (16), pp. 173f.

52 For these orders, see Chapter 1 above, p. 37; Chapter 2, pp. 157f.; and Loewe, "Aristocratic ranks." The most detailed examination of this institution and its social effects will be found in Nishijima Sadao, *Chūgoku kodai teikoku no keisei to kōzō* (Tokyo, 1961), pp. 55f.

certain that at such general bestowals only one male member of each household could benefit.[53] With successive bestowals a man could rise in the hierarchy, but not beyond the eighth place in the series of orders. The higher orders (those from the ninth place upward) were given as a single act of bounty, and far more sparingly; in general they were reserved for members of the official class in return for specified acts of service. As the orders were intended to be an incentive for service, there were even some occasions when they could be earned or purchased according to a published scale – by acts of valor on the battlefield, or by delivery of grain to the frontier, or in direct return for cash.

Some form of land tenure may have accompanied the gift of the higher orders other than the marquisates. Other privileges, which pertained in some measure to the lower orders as well, included reduction of punishments for crime and exemption from tax and state service; and in the particular case of a special series of orders instituted as an emergency measure in 123 B.C., entry to rhe civil service.[54]

Propagandists for the Han empire have made much of the claim that one of the first achievements of Liu Pang and his advisors was to mitigate the severities and complexities of the penal code with which Ch'in had maintained discipline. Unfortunately no complete code of laws survives either from Ch'in or from Han; but a study of the fragments that are cited in contemporary or near contemporary writings indicates thar despite Liu Pang's simplification of penal law to three principles, practice was somewhat arbitrary and could be very severe. In theory the laws applied universally to all members of the popularion; but in practice there were privileged groups in society, in addition to those who could exercise their special rights as holders of orders of honor. These persons were mostly officials and members of the imperial clan, whose privileged position served to emphasize the glories of state and the prestige of the civil service. As in all empires, there were cases of arbitrary manipulation by officials, either to protect their own favorites or perhaps to remove potential opponents.

A whole variety of crimes was punishable by law; crimes against morality, which included parricide and matricide, cursing the emperor, and overt rebellion; crimes of violence, such as robbery or the use of black magic; misuse of authority, such as the illicit entry of officials into private

53 For the view that a general bestowal benefitted more than one member of the household, see Nishijima, *Chūgoku kodai teikoku no keisei to kōzō*, pp. 252–62.

54 For the institution of the special series of military orders in 123 B.C., see Loewe, "Aristocratic ranks," pp. 129f.

dwellings or the call-up of men without due cause; defiance of the authority of the state, such as the forgery of edicts or the concealment of fugitives from justice. There were also crimes of a religious nature, such as the infringement of imperial shrines or mausolea, or lack of respect for the emperor.[55]

Revenue, labor and control of the population

The principal sources of revenue were the land tax and the poll tax, which are described in detail elsewhere.[56] In general the rates of taxation remained static during Han; as a result, the total sum of revenue could only be increased appreciably if wider areas were put under the plow and if larger numbers of households were listed on the registers.

Except for privileged persons, all able-bodied males between twenty-three and fifty-six were obliged to render one month's annual service to the state, and the officials of commanderies, counties, or the lower levels controlled the work of the gangs that were formed in this way. The men transported staple goods such as grain or hemp cloth by hand, by oxcart, or by boat; they built palaces and official quarters; they mined or carried the salt and iron that was produced in the state-owned industries; and they laid out or repaired roads, bridges, and waterways.

Conscript labor dug a canal that was intended to link Ch'ang-an with the Yellow River in place of the sluggish Wei River (129–128 B.C.); and the men dug other canals whose purpose was to improve irrigation and make the metropolitan area more self-sufficient. Conscripts worked at the repair of the Yellow River dikes; for example, in the years before 109 B.C. and again in 29 B.C. In the first case, the emperor took a personal part in the scheme; the second occasion is an excellent example of efficient and successful work undertaken by the government's hydraulic engineers.

Officials first distributed materials to relieve distress in the areas affected by the river's breach, and five hundred boats were assembled to evacuate the population. The breaches were then sealed by the skilful manipulation of craft, which towed large canisters of rock and lowered them into position. About a century later, Wang Ching set about surveying the problems of the Yellow River and used conscript labor to build a series of gates whereby the flow of water could be regulated. For Later Han an inscription tells of the use of state labor to build a road and a

55 For further details of legal provisions and procedures, see Chapter 9 below.
56 See Chapter 10 below, pp. 591f.

causeway in the intractable terrain of west China (the modern Szechwan) in A.D. 63.[57]

The seasonal distress of flood, drought, or plague, which afflicts China with monotonous and grievous regularity, doubtless brought about many spontaneous migrations of those who wished to escape disaster. It has been argued that it was just such a migration, caused by the vagaries of the Yellow River, which set in motion the events that led to Wang Mang's downfall.[58] But there were also occasions when a migration was ordered or stimulated by the government in the interests of defense or a more even distribution of resources. Some migrations were proposed in order to colonize distant areas or to relieve conditions of overpopulation; others were undertaken in the face of alien pressure or invasion. At the outset of the Han period, the government may have used this device as a means of breaking up local family loyalties that could have threatened the central government. Under Later Han a large number of non-Chinese tribes who had surrendered came to be settled within China; their presence there was to become a disruptive factor capable of disturbing dynastic and social stability in the third century.[59]

Promotion and control of the economy

In extreme terms, it may be said that two attitudes were open to the statesmen of Ch'in and Han: either they could advocate deliberate measures to encourage material production and to bend the effort of the people toward the enrichment of the state; or they could regard such activities as a grave and unwarranted interference in human undertakings, believing that the will of Heaven or the natural rhythms of the cosmos would let the earth develop her own fullness in the interests of man. But in practice the two points of view did not always diverge irreconcilably.

On the whole the positive policies adopted in Wu-ti's reign and sporadically thereafter derived from the realism of his statesmen; and a laissez-faire attitude predominated at times of dynastic and administrative weakness. Wang Mang's attempt to introduce orderly principles could hardly succeed in the prevailing state of administrative weakness and social unrest; and in

57 For the use of conscript labor in the construction or repair of waterworks, see *HS* 6, p. 193 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 90); *HS* 29, pp. 1679, 1682; *SC* 29, pp. 1409, 1412 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. III, pp. 526f., 532); *HS* 29, p. 1688 (Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 191f.). For the inscription under reference, see Wang Ch'ang, *Chin-shih ts'ui-pien* 5.12b.

58 See Chapter 3 above, pp. 240f.; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. I, pp. 145f.

59 For migrations, see, e.g.: *HS* 43, p. 2125; *HS* 5, p. 139 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 309–10); Swann, *Food and money*, p. 61; Yoshinami, *Shin Kan teikokushi kenkyū*, pp. 209f., 227f., 239f. See also Chapter 6 above, pp. 402, 426f.

the last half-century of Han the manifest failure of government to meet its obligations or to provide security and prosperity led some contemporary writers to hope for a revival of "legalist" principles as a means of saving the state from ruin.[60]

Statesmen of both points of view agreed basically in holding that agriculture was China's basic means of livelihood and should be given priority over commerce and industry. But they disagreed over the means of attaining this end. Realists thought that the land was best exploited by private enterprise, and that owners should be encouraged to acquire new sources of wealth by reclaiming unworked plots. By this means, state revenues would be proportionately increased; no limit need be set to the size of an individual holding; and the population, and with it the receipts from the poll tax, would grow correspondingly.

The same men took the view that the production, manufacture, and distribution of iron wares and salt should not be a source of wealth for individuals, but should be managed directly in the interests of the state; in this way any profits from such undertakings would accrue immediately to the treasury. The realists saw a need to sponsor, regulate, and control commercial exchanges, and for this reason they introduced a fully standardized coinage (112 B.C.), attempts to stabilize prices and transport, and official regulation of the markets. Finally, the realists took heed of the waste involved in building up large stocks of perishable goods such as grain and cloth, and even appreciated the value of an export-import trade with the communities of Central Asia.[61]

Conservative critics of the policies adopted in these respects during Wu-ti's reign harked back to an ideal scheme of limiting landholdings in order to reduce the growing disparity between rich and poor; for they wished to ensure that the basic means of livelihood, the production of food from the soil, would be open to all members of the community. But they preferred to leave the mines free for private exploitation, in the belief that the state should not occupy itself with manufacture or bring pressure to bear on the population by directing its labor to those secondary occupations. They

60 For example, Wang Fu (ca. A.D. 90–165), Ts'ui Shih (b. ca. A.D. 110), and Chung-ch'ang T'ung (b. A.D. 180), for whom see Étienne Balazs, "Political philosophy and social crisis at the end of the Han dynasty," in his *Chinese civilization and bureaucracy: Variations on a theme*, trans. H. M. Wright, ed. Arthur F. Wright (New Haven and London, 1964), pp. 187–225. See also Chapter 12 below, pp. 713f. For the effect of these different points of view on practical issues, see Loewe, "Attempts at economic co-ordination during the Western Han dynasty."

61 For control of the markets, see Chapter 10 below, p. 576. For the salt and iron industries, see again Chapter 10, pp. 582f.; and for changes in the coinage, see Chapter 10, pp. 585f. For views on the exchange of goods with alien peoples, see *Yen-t'ieh lun* 1 *(p'ien* 2), p. 12 (Esson M. Gale, trans. *Discourses on salt and iron: A debate on state control of commerce and industry in ancient China; chapters I–XIX, translated from the Chinese of Huan K'uan with introduction and notes* [Leiden, 1931; rpt. Taipei, 1967], p. 14).

also disliked the accumulation of large private fortunes by merchants, and introduced some discriminatory measures to prevent their rise to prominence. In addition, the conservatives disagreed with the realists over trade with non-Chinese peoples. They thought it improper to spend China's resources, the fruits of the peasants' labor, in order to acquire foreign luxuries such as jade, woolens, or horses, which added nothing to the material betterment of the multitude.

These issues and many others were discussed in the famous debate of 81 B.C.[62] The disputants argued their cases on grounds of principle and expediency, citing from the customs of the past and the practices of the present. In the event the chief monopolies survived the scathing criticism to which they were subjected until they were temporarily withdrawn for three years from 44 B.C. Under Later Han they were not to operate to the same degree of efficiency as previously. It was not until 7 B.C. that a government tried actively to limit the extent of landholding, and with it the number of slaves. But such measures could not be implemented effectively, and by the middle of Later Han the growth of large landed estates was becoming a dominant characteristic of some of the provinces. The conduct of trade was bound up intimately with China's military strength and foreign policy, and the volume of goods exported varied considerably between ca. 100 B.C. and A.D. 150, as China's prestige rose and fell among its neighbors.

62 See Chapter 2 above, pp. 187f.; and Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 91–112.

CHAPTER 8

THE INSTITUTIONS OF LATER HAN

The most important source for the study of Later Han institutions is the "Treatise on the hundred officials" (more freely, "Treatise on bureaucracy") in the *Hou-Han shu* or *Later Han history*. This text is systematic, detailed, and much superior to its counterpart in the *Han shu*. Additional information is found in surviving fragments of once comprehensive accounts on bureaucracy by Han authors. The institutions of Later Han are therefore more fully known than those of Former Han, even though there can be no doubt that the basic pattern was the same.[1]

As in Former Han times, the status of officials was defined by a scale beginning with those entitled to stipends equivalent to 10,000 bushels (*shih*) of grain at the top, and ending with assistant clerks (*tso-shih*) at the bottom. From 23 B.C. onward, the number of ranks was eighteen. The grand tutor (*t'ai-fu*) was above the scale. Stipends were fixed in relation to this theoretical ranking, but were not in direct proportion to it.[2]

THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

The grand tutor

During Former Han, the office of the grand tutor (*t'ai-fu*) had been filled only at the beginning and end of the dynasty. The Later Han used a different approach and appointed twelve grand tutors throughout the entire

1 The primary source of information will be found in *Hou-Han shu* (tr.) 24–28. Copious annotation by Chinese scholars which adds considerably to the basic information by drawing on contemporary writings that are now lost is best found in Wang Hsien-ch'ien's *Hou-Han shu chi-chieh* (Ch'ang-sha, 1915; rpt. Taipei, 1955). For more detailed accounts of the institutions described in this chapter, see Bielenstein, *The restoration of the Han dynasty*, Vol. IV, *BMFEA* 51 (1979); and Bielenstein, *The bureaucracy of Han times* (Cambridge, 1980). In his other works, Professor Bielenstein has adopted different equivalents for some of the titles of officials that are used here. For convenience, in the more important instances these are appended at their first occurrence below, immediately after the Chinese expression itself. For a complete list of the terms used to render titles, see pp. xxv–xxxvii above.

2 For the method of payment and corresponding disrinctions in the types of official seal and sash, see Nunome Chōfū, "Hansen hankoku ron," *Ritsumeikan bungaku*, 148 (1967), 633–53; and Chapter 7 above, p. 465.

period. An aged and respected man was normally selected for the position shortly after the enthronement of an emperor, but the grand tutors usually died after a few years, and the office was then left vacant for the remainder of the reign.

The grand tutor was the most senior of all officials, and he was expected to give moral guidance to the emperor. That function was merely symbolic, so that the first two incumbents enjoyed what amounted to sinecures. With the appointment of the third grand tutor in A.D. 75, the character of the office changed. He and his successors were given supervisory duties over the secretariat, (*shang-shu;* masters of writing) and from that time onward came to head sizable ministries.[3]

The three excellencies

The Later Han dynasty maintained the system established in 8 B.C. by which the three highest regularly appointed career officials had the same rank. These were the so-called three excellencies (*san kung*): the grand minister of finance (*ta ssu-t'u;* grand minister over the masses), the marshal of state (*ta ssu-ma;* commander in chief), and the grand minister of works (*ta ssu-k'ung*). In A.D. 51 the titles were changed to minister of finance (*ssu-t'u*), supreme commander (*t'ai-wei;* grand commandant), and minister of works (*ssu-k'ung*).[4] It is significant that the minister of finance lost the prefix "grand" in his title at that time. His predecessor during Former Han, the chancellor (*ch'eng-hsiang*), had been the most powerful of the three excellencies, and spokesman for the career bureaucracy. But during the reign of Kuang-wu-ti (A.D. 25–57) the office suffered a loss of status from which it never recovered. It was the supreme commander who gradually became the most influential among the three.

The minister of finance was in charge of the state budget. His ministry received and checked the financial accounts, including registers of population and cultivated land, which were brought to the capital at the end of each year by officials from the local administration. He kept a roster of officials, annually evaluated their performances, and recommended candidates for vacancies. He also directed the court conference in the absence of the emperor and then summarized the advice in a memorial.

From 87 B.C. onward, the title of marshal of state had been conferred on

3 *HHS* (tr.) 24, p. 3556.

4 For the changes of 8 B.C., 1 B.C. and A.D. 51, see *HS* 11, p. 344 (Homer H. Dubs, *The history of the Former Han dynasty*, 3 vols. [Baltimore, 1938–55], Vol. III, p. 37); *HS* 19A, pp. 724–25; *HHS* 1B, p. 79; and *HHS* (tr.) 24, pp. 3557, 3560, 3562.

the regent.[5] Later Han did not revive it for that purpose. The first two and only holders of the office were military men. With the change of title to supreme commander in A.D. 51, all appointees were civilians.

The minister of works supervised public works and examined the performance of officials responsible for such activities. This office had not existed during Former Han. Then, the imperial counsellor (*yü-shih ta-fu;* grandee secretary) had been one of the three senior statesmen; at first as an assistant to the chancellor and later as a minister in his own right. He had been the empire's chief censor, and had overseen the performance of all officials, whether palace or regular bureaucracy, and whether central government or local administration. The purpose was to prevent abuse of authority. The disappearance of this ministry in 8 B.C., reaffirmed in 1 B.C., does not mean that supervision was abandoned, but that it was decentralized. The performance of officials was henceforth under the ultimate tripartite scrutiny of the three excellencies. While this may have been intended to provide checks and balances, it must also have resulted in a certain weakening of authority.

The three excellencies, in addition to their particular functions, were advisors to the emperor. They were consulted or could voluntarily make proposals on all matters of policy. In that sense, the three excellencies may be described as the imperial cabinet, with collective responsibility and overlapping duties.

All ministries of the three excellencies were organized in the same general way. Only that of the supreme commander is systematically described in the sources,[6] but the organization undoubtedly varied little from one ministry to the other. Each of the three excellencies was assisted by one chief clerk (*chang-shih*). Their ministries were divided into bureaus (*ts'ao*) and staffed with numerous clerks and attendants.

The nine ministers

Ranking directly below the three excellencies, the nine ministers (*chiu-ch'ing*) headed specialized and sometimes large ministries. They were not direct subordinates of the three excellencies, although these examined their performances.

The first of the nine ministers was the superintendent of ceremonial

5 *HS* 7, p. 217 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 151); *HS* 68, p. 2932; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict in Han China* (London, 1974), p. 118.

6 *HHS* (tr.) 24, pp. 3557f. For corresponding references for the establishment of these offices in Former Han, see *HS* 19A, pp. 726f.

(*t'ai-ch'ang;* grand master of ceremonies), who was in charge of state rituals, divination, imperial tombs, the observatory, and higher education.[7] He had several senior aides. The director of prayer (*t'ai-chu ling*) was the national prayer master. The director of butchery (*t'ai-tsai ling*), with many attendants, prepared and arranged food for national sacrifices. The director of music (*t'ai-yüeh ling*), in A.D. 60 renamed director of music (Yü) (*t'ai-Yü-yüeh ling*), directed the musicians and dancers who performed at court functions and rituals. The director of the shrine of Kao-ti (*Kao-miao ling*) and the director of the shrine of Kuang-wu-ti (*shih-tsu-miao ling*) were responsible for the shrines to the founders of Former and Later Han in Lo-yang.[8] A director of the memorial park (*yüan-ling*) and a director of offerings (*ssu-kuan ling*) were appointed for each of the Later Han imperial tombs.

The director of astrology (*t'ai-shih ling*) was in charge of astronomical-astrological observations at the imperial observatories, the most important of which was the Spiritual Terrace (Ling-t'ai).[9] He drew up the annual calendar and identified auspicious days, kept a record of auspicious omens and portents, supervised divination, administered tests in reading and writing which had to be passed by prospective members of the secretariat, and maintained a cosmological temple known as the Bright Hall (Ming-t'ang). The director of astrology had to be an exceptionally versatile man, and it is not surprising that one of them invented the world's first seismograph in A.D. 132.[10] The academician (libations) (*po-shih chi-chiu*) was the head of the Academy (T'ai-hsüeh), which was the imperial university with a student enrollment of more than 30,000 in the middle of the second century A.D. Finally, the inspector of the imperial library (*pi-shu chien*), appointed from A.D. 159 onward, was the chief imperial librarian.

The second of the nine ministers was the superintendent of the palace (*kuang-lu-hsün;* superintendent of the imperial household).[11] His chief duty was to ensure the emperor's safety outside the private apartments of the palace. For that purpose, he had authority over five units. The first three of these, the so-called Three Corps (*San-shu*), enrolled candidates for office

7 *HHS* (tr.) 25, pp. 3571f.

8 That is, Kao-ti and Kuang-wu-ti. For the location of these shrines, see Hans Bielenstein, "Lo-yang in Later Han times," *BMFEA*, 48 (1976), 54f. For the earlier growth in the number of shrines dedicated to deceased emperors, and their reduction, see Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 179f.

9 For details of this structure and its history, see Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," pp. 61f.; and Chung-kuo she-hui k'o-hsüeh yüan, K'ao-ku yen chiu-so, Lo-yang kung-tso-tui, "Han Wei Lo-yang ch'eng nan-chiao ti Ling-t'ai i-chih," *KK*, 1978.1, 54–57.

10 For the tests in reading and writing, see A. F. P. Hulsewé, "The Shuo-wen dictionary as a source for ancient Chinese law," in *Studia Serica Bernhard Karlgren dedicata*, ed. Søren Egerod and Else Glahn, (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgard, 1959), pp. 239–58. For Chang Heng and the invention of the seismograph, see *HHS* 59, pp. 1897f.; and Joseph Needham, *Science and civilisation in China* (Cambridge, 1954–), Vol. III, pp. 626f.

11 *HHS* (tr.) 25, pp. 3574f.

who underwent a probationary period in the capital, and who collectively were referred to as the "gentlemen" (*lang*). They served as bodyguards of the emperor, either in the public sections of the palace or when he went out on excursions. The gentlemen were commanded by the leader of the gentlemen of the palace (all purposes) (*wu-kuan chung-lang chiang*), the leader of the gentlemen of the palace (left) (*tso chung-lang chiang*), or the leader of the gentlemen of the palace (right) (*yu chung-lang chiang*), depending on the unit to which they belonged.

The members of the other two units were also called gentlemen, but normally they were not candidates for office and simply served as imperial bodyguards. They were cavalrymen. One of these units was under the leader of the gentlemen of the palace ("rapid as tigers," *hu-pen chung-lang chiang*). The other, whose members were recruited from northwestern China, was commanded by the leader of the gentlemen of the palace ("of the feathered forest," *yü-lin chung-lang chiang*).

The Later Han dynasty abolished a number of offices whose functions had duplicated those of the five units. On the other hand, the titles of commandant of imperial carriages (*feng-chü tu-wei*) and commandant of attendant cavalry (*fu-ma tu-wei*) were incorporated into the bureaucracy. These had been supernumerary titles in Former Han times; during Later Han, they became regular offices under the superintendent of the imperial household, and were simultaneously granted to up to three and five men, respectively. Since none of them had any subordinates, their positions were largely sinecures, except in times of war. A similar sinecure in the same ministry was the office of commandant of cavalry (*chi tu-wei*), which was filled by up to ten men simultaneously.

Another duty of the superintendent of the palace was to oversee certain imperial advisors. These were the counsellors of the palace (*kuang-lu ta-fu;* imperial household grandees), numbering up to three, the counsellors in attendance (*chung-san ta-fu*; up to twenty), and the gentlemen consultants (*i-lang*; up to fifty). None gave advice spontaneously; they merely responded to imperial questions. The court also used these officials for various errands. In addition, up to thirty advisory counsellors (*chien-i ta-fu*) were appointed. They were supposed to act as censors of the emperor's performance, and at times of that of the bureaucracy in general, but there is no way of knowing how courageously they performed their duties.

The superintendent of the imperial household also controlled the imperial messengers (*yeh-che;* internuncios), who were sent on missions throughout the empire and beyond its borders, and who assisted at ceremonies. The number of messengers, who served in three different ranks, was by Later Han reduced from seventy to thirty-five, and preference was given to men

with loud voices and strong beards. Their immediate superior was the supervisor of the imperial messengers (*yeh-che p'u-yeh*).

Third among the nine ministers was the superintendent of the guards (*wei-wei;* commandant of the palace guards).[12] While the superintendent of the imperial household was responsible for protecting the emperor within the public sections of the palace grounds, the superintendent of the guards directed the garrisons at the outer guards of these compounds. The division of authority is important, and was intended to prevent a single official from gaining complete physical control over the ruler.

The superintendent of the guards was in charge of close to 3,000 conscripts, who under seven majors (*ssu-ma*) guarded the four gates of the Southern Palace and the three gates of the Northern Palace in Lo-yang. The conscripts also patrolled the wall surrounding these compounds, and presumably the covered, elevated passageway connecting the two. Another subordinate was the director of the majors (official carriages) (*kung-chü ssu-ma ling*). Each palace compound had one Gate of Official Carriages, where the official vehicles were kept. These were used for bringing to the capital those men who had been summoned on account of their high moral character or unusual technical skills. Memorials were accepted at the same two gates.

The captain of the capital (left) (*tso tu-hou*) and the captain of the capital (right) (*yu tu-hou*) were appointed to offices newly created in Later Han, and may have replaced the director of the emergency cohort (*lü-pen ling*) of Former Han. They commanded "warriors with swords and lances" (*chien-chi shih*) who patrolled the palace compounds and also carried out imperial arrests.

The fourth of the nine ministers was the superintendent of transport (*t'ai-p'u;* grand coachman).[13] He supervised the breeding of horses for the army and the emperor's use, and was responsible for the imperial stables and coachhouses. The pastures were originally located in the northwest, but from A.D. 112 some of these were replaced by five new pastures in Szechwan and Yunnan.

The frugal founder of Later Han reduced the number of stables and coachhouses sharply. At first only a director of the eternal stables (*wei-yang-chiu ling*) and a director of coachhouses (*chü-fu ling*) seem to have been appointed. A director of the stables for fine horses (left) (*tso chün-chiu ling*) and (right) (*yu chün-chiu ling*) were added at an unknown time, with a director of the *ch'eng-hua* (continuing flowers) stables (*ch'eng-hua-chiu ling*) in A.D. 142, and an assistant of the stables for thoroughbreds (*lu-chi-chiu ch'eng*) in A.D. 181.[14]

12 *HHS* (tr.) 25, pp. 3579f. 13 *HHS* (tr.) 25, pp. 3581f.

14 *HHS* 6, p. 272; *HHS* 8, p. 345; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 37, 167 notes 137 and 138.

The director of manufactures (*k'ao-kung ling*), who during Former Han had been a subordinate of the superintendent of the lesser treasury (see p. 499 below), was by Later Han placed under the superintendent of transport. The director headed a factory which produced such things as bows, crossbows, swords, and armor, which then were placed in the arsenal (*wu-k'u*) of Lo-yang. Perhaps the superintendent provided the horses for transport, and in that way became responsible for the entire operation.[15]

Fifth among the nine ministers was the superintendent of trials (*t'ing-wei;* commandant of justice).[16] He was the chief interpreter of the law who ruled on cases referred to him by local administrators, and who also may have had some influence on trials held in the commanderies. In Later Han the senior staff of this ministry was reduced to one controller (*cheng*), one inspector of the left (*tso-chien*), and one moderator of the left (*tso-p'ing*). The last-mentioned official conducted trials in the imperial prison attached to the ministry. It is probable that the lesser subordinates were organized into bureaus, but detailed information is lacking.

The sixth of the nine ministers was the superintendent of state visits (*ta hung-lu;* grand herald).[17] He was responsible for receiving visitors to the court, for ensuring the orderly succession of noble titles among kings and marquises, for guiding those invited to imperial ceremonies, and for greeting and negotiating with foreign embassies. Later Han reorganized this ministry and reduced its size. The superintendent was still aided by one assistant (*ch'eng*), but of three former directors, only the prefect grand usher (*ta-hsing ling;* prefect grand usher) remained. There is no longer mention of the office of interpreters (*i-kuan*), although it must have continued to exist.[18] The superintendent was also in charge of the provincial lodges (*chün-ti*) in Lo-yang, one for each commandery and kingdom. These were hostels providing accommodation for men who came to the capital on official and, occasionally, private business. Direction of the dependent states no longer rested with this ministry, but was shifted to the local administration.

Seventh among the nine ministers was the superintendent of the imperial clan (*tsung-cheng;* director of the imperial clan), who was always a member of the imperial house himself.[19] He kept a regularly updated register of all persons belonging to the imperial clan. If clan members committed serious crimes, the superintendent had to seek the emperor's approval before any

15 For the arsenal, see Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," p. 57.

16 *HHS* (tr.) 25, p. 3582. See Chapter 9 below, pp. 528f.; and Hulsewé, "The function of the commandant of justice during the Han period" (forthcoming).

17 *HHS* (tr.) 25, p. 3583f.

18 The Office of Interpreters is included among the subordinate parts of this ministry in the establishment for Former Han (*HS* 19A, p. 730). For a reference to its existence ca. A.D. 75, see *HHS* 40B, p. 1374.

19 *HHS* (tr.) 26, p. 3589.

punishment was meted out. The personnel of the households of imperial sisters and daughters, but not those of imperial sons, were under the control of this minister. His senior staff was reduced to a single assistant (*ch'eng*) by Later Han.

The eighth of the nine ministers was the superintendent of agriculture (*ta ssu-nung;* grand minister of agriculture).[20] In spite of his title, he was the government treasurer who stored the taxes after these had been collected by the local administration. He paid the bills for the upkeep of the bureaucracy and army, and was responsible for stabilizing the prices of important commodities.

The superintendent of agriculture had a single assistant (*ch'eng*) at the beginning of Later Han. A second was added in A.D. 82 and placed in charge of the treasury of the superintendent of agriculture (*Ta ssu-nung t'ang-ts'ang*). The director of the great granary (*t'ai-ts'ang ling*) administered the great granary in Lo-yang, which served the needs of the court and the bureaucracy. The director of price stabilization (*p'ing-chun ling*) enforced price stabilization by buying goods when these were cheap and selling them when they were dear. He must have controlled the Ever Full Granary (*ch'ang-man ts'ang*), which was established in the eastern suburbs of Lo-yang in A.D. 62.[21]

Other Former Han subordinates of the superintendent of agriculture who had contributed toward price stabilization by transporting goods from one locality to others, who had provisioned the army with grain, who had supervised the tax collection, and who had supervised the Sacred Field (on which the emperor performed the ceremonial plowing at the beginning of each year) were no longer appointed.[22] Management of the monopolies on salt and iron was transferred to the local administration. On the other hand, the director of grain selection (*tao-kuan ling*) was shifted to the ministry of the grand minister of agriculture from that of the privy treasurer. This official supervised the selection of grain and dried provisions for the imperial court.

The superintendent of agriculture also gained control over the emperor's private purse. Taxes paid by those who made their incomes in marketplaces, or from mountains, seas, ponds and marshes, had traditionally been set aside as the private purse of the emperor. During Former Han, the private purse had been administered by the superintendent of the lesser treasury and had been kept strictly separate from the public purse, which

20 *HHS* (tr.) 26, pp. 3590f. 21 For the granaries, see Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," pp. 57, 59.

22 For these officials, see *HHS* 19A, p. 731. For the ceremonial act of plowing by the emperor, see Derk Bodde, *Festivals in classical China: New Year and other annual observances during the Han dynasty, 206 B.C.-A.D. 220* (Princeton and Hong Kong, 1975), pp. 223f.

was controlled by the superintendent of agriculture. In Later Han the two were amalgamated and placed with the superintendent of agriculture. This was a retrograde step, enabling unscrupulous emperors to dip into public funds.[23]

The ninth and last of the nine ministers was the privy superintendent of the lesser treasury (*shao-fu;* privy treasurer).[24] He headed the largest ministry, but was one of the least influential of the nine. This was because he had only nominal authority over the secretariat and the eunuchs.

The superintendent, who was not a eunuch, saw to the well-being of the emperor and his household, to law and order in the harem, and to the upkeep of the palace grounds and imperial parks. He was also the nominal supervisor of certain attendants of the sovereign. The ministry underwent a drastic reorganization during Later Han, the least of which was the reduction of ministerial assistants (*ch'eng*) from six to one. Of greater importance, the secretariat (*shang-shu*) grew in size and power. It was, as before, under the director of the secretariat (*shang-shu ling;* prefect of the masters of writing) and his substitute, the supervisor of the secretariat (*shang-shu p'u-yeh*). Both had to seal all documents emanating from the throne. They were aided by an assistant of the left (*tso-ch'eng*) and an assistant of the right (*yu-ch'eng*).

The secretariat was divided into bureaus, which during Former Han had finally numbered five. The founder of Later Han abolished one of these and subdivided two of the remaining ones. This resulted in six bureaus.[25] The bureau for regular attendants (*ch'ang-shih ts'ao*) handled all correspondence with the three excellencies and nine ministers. Two bureaus for senior officials (*erh-ch'ien-shih ts'ao*) were in charge of correspondence with provincial inspectors and grand administrators. The bureau for the civil population (*min-ts'ao*) received memorials to the throne from officials and people. The bureau for superintending guests of south and north (*nan, pei chu-k'o ts'ao*) were responsible for correspondence with foreign nations and tribes. Each bureau was under one member of the secretariat, who was aided by lesser staff, including government slaves. The bureaus, which were located within the palace precincts, were manned in shifts day and night and continuously patrolled by armed guards.

It is obvious that the secretariat played a crucial role in the receiving and drafting of documents, and that in consequence its senior staff could influence policy. Being close to the emperor or his deputy, the members could ignore their nominal superior, the superintendent of the lesser treasury.

23 For the distinction between the functions of these financial organs, see Katō Shigeshi, *Shina keizaishi kōshō* (Tokyo, 1952–3), Vol. I, pp. 35f.; and Chapter 7 above, p. 469; and Chapter 10 below, pp. 591f. 24 *HHS* (tr.) 26, pp. 3592f. 25 *HHS* (tr.) 26, p. 3597.

They came, in fact, to form an imperial cabinet which rivaled the power of the three excellencies. Authority over the secretariat automatically resulted in considerable, though by no means total, control over the central government.[26]

The members of the secretariat were not eunuchs and could not attend on the emperor in the harem quarters of the palace. But, like their Former Han predecessors, the Later Han rulers also conducted government business in their private apartments. Since they did not revive the earlier office of palace writers (*chung-shu*), it stands to reason that they made informal use of eunuchs as secretaries.[27]

Another subordinate of the superintendent of the lesser treasury was the director of insignia and credentials (*fu-chieh ling*) and his staff. He was in charge of the imperial seals and other types of insignia and credentials.

The assistant to the imperial counsellor (*yü-shih chung-ch'eng*) had during Former Han been in the ministry of the imperial counsellor. Later Han placed him with the superintendent of the lesser treasury, where he still had censorial duties of two kinds. On the one hand, he inspected memorials to the throne for infringements of the law. On the other, he checked on the performance of all officials in the central government and impeached those who were delinquent. This means that the authority of the palace assistant secretary had both increased and decreased as compared to Former Han. In the capital, his supervision was no longer restricted to palace officials, but he had completely lost his role as chief inspector of local administration.

Later Han reduced the number of supernumerary titles[28] and normalized others by creating new offices. Palace attendants (*shih-chung*) were henceforth regularly appointed as advisors to the emperor. The gentlemen of the yellow gates (*huang-men shih-lang*) waited on the emperor and acted as liaison between him and the outside world.

The director of medical care (*t'ai-i ling*), with a substantial staff, checked on the emperor's health each morning, and treated him during illnesses. The director of catering (*t'ai-kuan ling*) provided from his stores food, drink (including wine), fruit, sweets, and other delicacies for the imperial table. The director of sacrifices (*tz'u-ssu ling*), who was a eunuch, was in charge of lesser sacrifices within the palace, and headed a staff which included household shamans (*chia-wu*). The director of stationery (*shou-kung ling*), who

26 For the relative strengths and significance of these two organs, see Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 143f.

27 For the *chung-shu*, see *HS* 19A, p. 732; Wang Yü-ch'üan, "An outline of the central government of the Former Han dynasty," *HJAS* 12 (1949), p. 172; and Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, p. 49.

28 That is, the *chia-kuan*, which were titles conferred on individual advisers without carrying any appointment to office. See *HS* 19A, p. 739.

from A.D. 157 onward was a eunuch, had responsibility for all kinds of writing materials.[29] The director of the Shang-lin Park (*Shang-lin-yüan ling*) administered the new hunting park west of Lo-yang and supplied game for the imperial cuisine. No staff is mentioned for the Kuang-ch'eng Park south of Lo-yang, which must be an oversight. From A.D. 158, there also was appointed a director of the Hung-te Park (*Hung-te-yüan ling*). It was probably located east of Lo-yang, and was a breeding ground for wild birds.[30]

The eunuchs, as castrates, could be employed in the "lateral courts" (*i-t'ing*) or imperial harem, and it is well known that their number and influence increased in the course of the dynasty. The regular palace attendants (*chung ch'ang-shih*) ranked highest among them.[31] Theirs had been a supernumerary title during Former Han, granted to imperial advisors who were not eunuchs. The Later Han established a permanent office with that name, to which only eunuchs were appointed. The authorized number of regular palace attendants grew from four in the reign of Ming-ti (A.D. 57–75) to ten in the reign of Ho-ti (A.D. 88–106). Although as attendants and advisors of the ruler they had no subordinates, they gradually gained great power by becoming the de facto leaders of the eunuchs.

General service to the emperor and practical management of the palaces was the responsibility of certain eunuch directors and supervisors, all of whom had the same rank. The director of the imperial wardrobe (*yü-fu ling*) was in charge of weaving materials, and of making, mending, and washing imperial garments. His work force consisted of female government slaves. The director of the valets (*nei-che ling*) looked after imperial apparel, curtains and the like.[32] The director of arts and crafts (*shang-fang ling*) directed artisans who manufactured objects for imperial use. The director of the palace storehouses (*chung tsang-fu ling*) stored silk, gold, silver, and so forth, and was probably also the palace paymaster.

The director, imperial harem (*i-t'ing ling*) supervised the harem ladies and participated through an assistant (*ch'eng*) in their selection. He also had jurisdiction over the prison hospital (*pu shih*) which, together with its surrounding grounds, was sometimes called the "prison of the lateral courts" (*i-t'ing yü*). This was a hospital and prison for harem ladies, including divorced empresses, and also a place where silk was woven, dyed,

29 *HHS* 7, p. 303; *HHS* (tr.) 26, p. 3592.

30 For these parks, see Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," pp. 80f.

31 *HHS* (tr.) 26, p. 3593. For the growth of eunuchs' power and their activities in government, see Chapter 3 above, pp. 287f.

32 Detailed prescriptions for the apparel suitable for the emperor and other persons are given in *HHS* (tr.) 30B, pp. 3661f. For the work of the *shang-fang* in making bronze mirrors, see Michael Loewe, *Ways to paradise: The Chinese quest for immortality* (London, 1979), pp. 166f.

softened by boiling, and dried. The director, *yung-hsiang* (long lanes) (*yung-hsiang ling*) managed the palace maids (*kung-jen*). These were female government slaves who attended the empress and the harem ladies, and who served as nurses.

The director of the yellow gates (*huang-men ling*) seems to have been in charge of eunuchs who waited on the emperor directly. In addition, he headed a number of lesser eunuch offices. Their duties are not spelled out, but they may have been concerned with the embellishment and upkeep of the various palace halls.

The supervisor of extra attendants (yellow gates) (*chung huang-men jung-ts'ung p'u-yeh*), whose office was created in Later Han, commanded eunuch bodyguards who protected the emperor in the harem quarters.[33] When he left the palace they rode close to his carriage, sharing this duty with the gentlemen under the superintendent of the imperial household. By this means, and in typical Chinese fashion, the emperor was not at the mercy of any single official. The supervisor of the imperial messengers of the palace (*chung yeh-che p'u-yeh*) and his subordinates, all of whom presumably were eunuchs, went on various kinds of errands for the emperor. The director of the imperial palace gardens (*kou-shun ling*), finally, was responsible for imperial gardens, parks, ponds, detached palaces, and lodges in and around Lo-yang. His duties were concerned with upkeep, as well as with the growing of fruits for the imperial table.

Additional eunuchs were appointed at lower ranks. The office of junior attendant of the yellow gates (*hsiao huang-men*) was created by the founder of Later Han, and the number of simultaneous incumbents grew to twenty in the reign of Ho-ti (A.D. 88–106). These acted as messengers of the emperor and as document carriers between him and the secretariat.[34]

In the course of time, eunuch inspectors were attached to various eunuch offices which served to coordinate their activities under the informal direction of the regular palace attendants. The growth of eunuch influence is also proved by the fact that in A.D. 175 price stabilization was withdrawn from the ministry of the superintendent of agriculture and placed under a eunuch palace director of standards (*chung chun-ling*).[35] It should be re-emphasized that, just as in the case of the secretariat, the growing power of the eunuchs did not bring about a commensurate increase of influence for the superintendent of the lesser treasury. Having direct access to the emperor, the eunuchs did not need to clear matters with the superintendent, so the latter's authority over them was entirely illusory.

33 *HHS* (tr.) 26, p. 3594.

34 *HHS* (tr.) 26, p. 3594; *HHS* 78, p. 2509. 35 *HHS* 8, p. 337.

Other palace offices

The empress, whose quarters were referred to as the Palace of Prolonged Autumn (Ch'ang-ch'iu kung), was served by a reorganized and expanded staff during Later Han. Her court was a miniature reflection of the emperor's. Theoretically it was supposed to consist of eunuchs, but there were exceptions to the rule.

The highest-ranking official of the empress was the supervisor of the empress's household (*ta ch'ang-ch'iu;* "grand prolonger of autumn").[36] Lesser officials had more limited duties. The director, *yung-hsiang* (long lanes) for the empress (*chung-kung yung-hsiang ling*) was in charge of the palace maids (female government slaves). The director of the empress's private treasury (*chung-kung ssu-fu ling*) was responsible for silk and other valuables, but also supervised the sewing, mending, and cleaning of garments and bedding. The director of the empress's transport (*chung-kung p'u*) controlled horses and chariots. The director of the empress's messengers (*chung-kung yeh-che ling*) headed a staff that went on various errands. Five officials known as *chung-kung shang-shu* acted as secretaries. The supervisor of the extra attendants (yellow gates) (*chung-kung huang-men jung-ts'ung p'u-yeh*) presumably commanded the bodyguard. The director of records for the empress (*chung-kung shu-ling*) may have kept a record of the emperor's cohabitations with the empress. This cannot have been a great burden, since most emperors seem to have avoided their politically chosen spouses. The chief of medicines for the empress (*chung-kung yao chang*) was the emperor's physician.

Whenever a consort became an empress dowager, her quarters henceforth were referred to as the Palace of Prolonged Joy (Ch'ang-lo kung), and her staff was increased. All titles were prefixed by the name of her palace. Similarly, the apartments of an emperor's mother who was not an empress dowager were from at least A.D. 150 called the Palace of Perpetual Joy (Yung-lo kung), and this name was prefixed to the titles of her staff.[37]

The residence of the heir apparent was called the Eastern Palace (Tung-kung). The Later Han introduced some changes in the organization of his staff. The senior tutor of the heir apparent (*t'ai-tzu t'ai-fu*) was divorced from all administration and simply appointed from among the most famous scholars of the empire as the teacher of the prince. The junior tutor of the heir apparent (*t'ai-tzu shao-fu*), although also acting as a teacher, was simultaneously placed in charge of all personnel. As in the case of the empress, the court of the heir apparent was a modest copy of that of the

36 *HHS* (tr.) 27, p. 3606. For the predecessor office of Former Han, named *ta ch'ang-ch'iu* in 144 B.C., see *HS* 19A, p. 734. 37 *HHS* 10B, p. 442; *HHS* (tr.) 27, p. 3608.

emperor. Five palace cadets (*t'ai-tzu chung shu-tzu*) offered advice. Two counsellors, heir apparent's household (*t'ai-tzu-men ta-fu*), supposedly had guard duties but perhaps also acted as advisors. The director of the household (*t'ai-tzu chia-ling*) was responsible for expenses and for keeping supplies of food and drink. He was aided in this task by the director of the granary (*t'ai-tzu ts'ang-ling*) and the director of catering (*t'ai-tzu ssu-kuan ling*). The director of transport (*t'ai-tzu p'u*) was assisted by the chief of stables (*t'ai-tzu chiu-chang*).

The safety of the heir apparent, another responsibility of the junior tutor, was in the usual fashion enforced by several officials. The director of the watch (*t'ai-tzu shuai-keng ling*) headed the cadets (*t'ai-tzu shu-tzu*) and the members of the suite (*t'ai-tzu she-jen*) who protected the prince in the public sections of his palace. The palace patroller (*t'ai-tzu chung-yün*) was in charge of men who patrolled the palace grounds, whereas the leader of the guards (*t'ai-tzu wei-shuai*) commanded the guards at the gates (*men wei-shih*).[38]

And finally, the outriders of the heir apparent (*t'ai-tzu hsien-ma*) preceded the chariot of the prince, and also were used as messengers. Nothing is recorded of the administration of the harem.

Other metropolitan offices

A number of officers had special importance because they were stationed in Lo-yang and connected with the administration of the capital territory. First among these was the superintendent of the capital (*chih chin-wu;* bearer of the gilded mace), whose title probably came from the mace he carried *ex officio.*[39] During Former Han, this official had ranked on a par with the nine ministers and sometimes had been included among them. Later Han lowered his rank and sharply reduced the size of his office. The superintendent continued to be responsible for law and order in the capital outside the palace compounds, for which purpose he sent his staff on regular patrols. Through his director of the arsenal (*wu-k'u ling*), he was also in charge of the storehouse for arms and military equipment which was located in the northeastern part of Lo-yang.[40]

The court architect (*chiang-tso ta-chiang*) directed the building and repair of imperial palaces, temples, and tombs, the construction of funerary parks, and the planting of trees. His office was abolished in A.D. 57 but was

38 *HHS* (tr.) 27, pp. 3606, 3608. For the predecessor offices of Former Han, which were subordinated to the *chan-shih*, see *HS* 19A, p. 734; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, p. 69.

39 *HHS* (tr.) 27, p. 3605. The office was called *chung-wei* in Former Han, before being changed to *chih chin-wu* in 104 B.C. (*HS* 19A, p. 732). 40 See Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," p. 57.

reestablished in A.D. 76. The work force consisted of convict laborers who were housed in two enclosures. The director of the enclosure of the left (*tso-hsiao ling*) may have been appointed throughout Later Han. The position of director of the enclosure of the right (*yu-hsiao ling*) was reestablished in A.D. 124.[41]

The office of superintendent of waterways and parks (*shui-heng tu-wei;* chief commandant of waters and parks) was abolished by the founder of Later Han, and only revived once a year for ceremonies held on the first day of autumn. During Former Han this official had been responsible for the Shang-lin Park at Ch'ang-an. Later Han replaced him on a permanent basis with a director of lesser rank, a subordinate of the lesser treasurer, who was in charge of a new hunting park with the same name at Lo-yang.[42]

The colonel of the city gates (*ch'eng-men hsiao-wei*), with one major (*ssu-ma*) and twelve captains (*hou*), commanded the military detachments at the twelve city gates of Lo-yang. His was an important office which was frequently granted to imperial distaff relatives.[43]

The colonel for internal security (*ssu-li hsiao-wei;* colonel director of the retainers) superintended the metropolitan region, which consisted of seven commanderies.[44] His duties did not differ from those of the inspectors of the other regions. Through his staff, organized into bureaus, he examined the conduct of all officials, the performance of ritual, and the achievement of the schools in the capital and adjoining territories. He impeached officials for violations of the law, but also recommended them for worthy actions.

Just as the metropolitan region enjoyed a special status, the capital commandery, Ho-nan, was distinguished from other commanderies. Although the officer responsible for it had the same rank as a regular grand administrator, his title from A.D. 39 was governor of Ho-nan (*Ho-nan yin*); and over and above his duties as a local official, he was concerned with aspects of the commercial and ritual life of the capital. His chief of the markets (*Lo-yang shih-chang*) supervised the three markets of the capital and cargo arriving by water.[45] An unknown subordinate directed the important Ao Granary, which was located some 130 kilometers (80 miles) east of Lo-yang and must have contributed to the provisioning of the capital. The director of supply (sacrifices) (*lin-hsi ling*) under the governor was reap-

41 *HHS* (tr.) 27, p. 3610.
42 For the *shui-heng tu-wei*, see Chapter 10 below, pp. 591f.; Katō, *Shina keizaishi kōshō*, Vol. I, p. 36.
43 *HHS* (tr.) 27, p. 3610.
44 *HHS* (tr.) 27, p. 3613. These units were the commanderies of Ho-nan, Ho-tung, Ho-nei, Hung-nung, and the regions that had formerly been under the authority of the governors of the three special officials of the metropolitan area. See Chapter 7 above, p. 472 and note 20.
45 *HHS* (tr.) 26, p. 3590. For the markets, see Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," pp. 58f.

pointed from A.D. 98 and supplied sacrificial grains and animals for state ceremonies.[46]

The mayor of Lo-yang (*Lo-yang ling*) was in a vulnerable position, since he had to enforce the law in a city which was inhabited by imperial relatives, other nobles, and powerful ministers, often highly self-willed. He controlled an imperial prison. Through his "masters of the left and of the right for filially pious and incorrupt" (*hsiao-lien tso-wei; hsiao-lien yu-wei*), he also had the special duty of overseeing the candidates for office who arrived in the capital after having been recommended by their commanderies or kingdoms.[47]

THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

The provincial staff

In A.D. 35, the founder of Later Han recognized the depopulation of Shuo-fang due to Hsiung-nu pressure, abolished this province, and added its territory to an adjoining unit.[48] This reduced the number of regions (*chou*), including the metropolitan region, from fourteen to thirteen.

Both Han dynasties appointed staffs for the purpose of inspecting the performance of all officials in the commanderies and kingdoms. But like its predecessor, the Later Han government could not decide whether these regional supervisors should rank high or low. It began by appointing regional commissioners (*mu*, "shepherds") at high rank, as had been the practice since 1 B.C. In A.D. 42 it adopted the title of regional inspector (*tz'u-shih*) at low rank. In A.D. 188 the title of commissioner, (shepherd) was reintroduced.[49] These abrupt changes sprang from the dilemma that neither senior nor junior supervisors were willing to act with unflinching courage. Older men wished to avoid problems during their last years in office; younger men feared to ruin their future careers. Both approaches had their advantages and disadvantages. Neither worked to perfection.

Before A.D. 35, the inspectors (or commissioners) had set out from the capital in the eighth month of each year and then returned to it in order to deliver their reports. Afterward, while they still made their annual tours of inspection in the eighth month, they were otherwise stationed in their provincial capitals. Their reports were delivered at each New Year to the

46 *HHS* 4, p. 185.

47 See the citation from *Han-kuan* in *HHS* (tr.) 28, p. 3623 note 3. 48 *HHS* 1B, p. 58.

49 For the establishment of these officials in 106 B.C., see Chapter 7 above, p. 475. For possible ideological considerations in the change of title from *tz'u-shih* to *mu*, see Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 166, 263. For changes in title in Later Han, see *HHS* 1B, p. 70; *HHS* 8, p. 357; *HHS* (tr.) 28, p. 3617.

central government by subordinates. Thus, in contrast to the former period, the Later Han inspectors (or commissioners) had much stronger ties with the local administration. Their staffs were organized into bureaus, each under an attendant clerk (*ts'ung-shih shih*). In addition, one attendant clerk was appointed to each commandery or kingdom of the region, and another acted as duty attendant clerk (*pieh-chia ts'ung-shih shih*). The latter had the responsibility of following the inspector (or commissioner) at public functions and of recording all matters, including conversations.[50]

The commandery staff

Each region included a varying number of commanderies (*chün*). If charge of territory was granted to an imperial son and his heirs as a fief, it was referred to as a kingdom (*wang-kuo*), but this did not affect the way in which it was administered. The total number of commanderies and kingdoms had been 103 at the end of Former Han. The founder of Later Han abolished ten of these units in A.D. 37. His successors created six new ones, so that the A.D. 140 census reports ninety-nine commanderies and kingdoms.[51]

Each commandery was under a governor (*t'ai-shou;* grand administrator). His counterpart in a kingdom had the courtesy title of chancellor (*hsiang*), but otherwise the same duties. These officials were responsible for all civilian and military affairs within their territories, including the administration of civil and criminal law. They personally inspected the subordinate counties in the spring, and dispatched members of their staffs for the same purpose in the fall. At the end of the year, they sent the annual accounts to the capital and simultaneously recommended candidates for office.[52]

During Former Han the governor had discharged his military duties through the commandant (*tu-wei;* chief commandant), who had been responsible for suppressing banditry, for training the local militia in maneuvers each eighth month, and in border communities, for inspecting beacons and fortifications. This office was abolished in A.D. 30, peripheral commanderies excepted, and only temporarily revived during major military emergencies. Henceforth, the governor had to cope with local unrest himself. Conscription was continued, but the annual maneuvers of the militia were canceled.

50 *HHS* (tr.) 28, p. 3619; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*. pp. 92, 181 note 9.
51 The list of units of which the empire was composed and their subordinate organizations will be found in *HHS* (tr.) 19–23.
52 *HHS* (tr.) 28, p. 3621. For the submission of these accounts and records, see Kamada Shigeo, *Shin Kan seiji seido no kenkyū*, (Tokyo, 1962), pp. 369f.; Yen Keng-wang, *Chung-kuo ti-fang hsing-cheng chih-tu shih* (Taipei, 1961), Vol. I, pp. 257–68.

The staff of a governor was organized into bureaus, whose number and spheres of authority varied somewhat from one commandery to another. The bureaus were in charge of such matters as local inspection, registration of population and cultivated land, agriculture and sericulture, tax grain and granaries, markets, postal stations and couriers, transmission of memorials, identification of worthy persons, military equipment, conscripts, civil law, criminal law, convicts, and the suppression of banditry. Depending on local conditions, there also existed bureaus for fords and canals, transportation by water, roads and bridges, beacons, architecture, and monopolies.

The monopolies on salt and iron had during Former Han been administered by agents of the superintendent of agriculture. In Later Han they were transferred to the local administration. Agencies for iron (*t'ieh-kuan*) and salt (*yen-kuan*) were established wherever these commodities were produced. Their activities were coordinated by bureaus on the county and commandery levels, and ultimately by the ministries of the three excellencies in the capital.[53]

The staff of the counties

All commanderies and kingdoms were divided into counties (*hsien*). They had numbered 1,577 in A.D. 2, but were only 1,179 in A.D. 140. This reduction of about 400 counties, which was ordered by the founder of Later Han in A.D. 30, acknowledged the decrease in population on the Great Plain and in the northwest.[54] Whenever an area such as a county was granted as a fief to a marquis, it was referred to as a marquisate (*hou-kuo*). Counties in certain sensitive locations, where control over local barbarians was especially imperative, were called marches (*tao*).

The magistrates (*hsien-ling, hsien-chang;* prefect, chief) of the counties had staggering responsibilities, for which they were normally ill-prepared by their previous training; the necessary expertise had to be gained in office. Each magistrate enforced law and order in his county, registered individuals and property, collected taxes, supervised seasonal work, stored grain against times of famine, mobilized people for state labor, supervised public works, conducted rituals, observed the performance of the schools, and judged civil and criminal cases.

The title of a magistrate depended on the size of his county. If the households numbered 10,000 or more, he was entitled *ling* (prefect); if less,

53 For details of the administration of salt and iron, see Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. IV, pp. 153f.; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, p. 99. See also *HHS* (tr.) 28, p. 3625.

54 *HHS* 1B, p. 49. See also Chapter 3 above, pp. 240f. For the figures given here for the counties, see Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, p. 185 notes 77, 78.

he was called a chief (*chang*). In practice, particularly at the time of a great internal migration, such distinctions could not be strictly observed. The magistrate of a marquisate had the courtesy title of chancellor (*hsiang*), but his duties did not differ from those of a *hsien-ling* or *hsien-chang*.[55]

The county staff was organized into bureaus which imitated the commandery administration and undoubtedly also varied according to local conditions. For the suppression of banditry, the magistrate was aided by one or two duty officers (*wei;* commandant), depending on the size of the county. In the fall and winter, the magistrate updated the registers on population, cultivated land, taxes, expenditures, and so on, and then sent them to the grand administrator of his commandery. They were there checked, amalgamated with those of other counties into a single report, and finally carried to the capital at the end of the year.[56]

Each county consisted of a walled capital city, surrounding villages, and farmlands. The territory was subdivided into districts (*hsiang*), the districts into communes (*t'ing*), and the communes into hamlets (*li*).[57] These units were governed by locally appointed officials. The district was administered by one elder (*san-lao;* thrice venerable) in charge of moral leadership, one chief of police (*yu-chiao;* patrol leader), and a third official responsible for tax collection, labor service, and the administration of justice. In districts of 5,000 or more households, the latter was called a "petty official with rank" (*yu-chih*); in smaller districts, an overseer (*se-fu;* bailiff). The commune was under a commune chief (*t'ing-chang*) who maintained law and order, and who was also responsible for the maintenance of postal stations (*yu-t'ing*). His headquarters were a combination of police station and official inn. The hamlet was under a headman (*li-k'uei*). Its inhabitants were grouped into units of five families (*wu*) and ten families (*shih*) which had collective responsibility for one another's conduct. On the lowest level of local administration, the people were consequently allowed a fair amount of self-government, even though the selection of the headman had to be ratified by the authorities.

The staff of the marquises (nobles)

During Later Han, all sons of emperors except the heir apparent were enfeoffed as kings, and the kingdoms were normally inherited by the eldest sons of the queens. Grandsons of emperors who did not inherit kingdoms were made marquises. From 127 B.C. sons of all kings, whatever their

55 *HHS* (tr.) 28, p. 3622. 56 *HHS* (tr.) 28, pp. 3622, 3623 note 2.
57 *HHS* (tr.) 28, pp. 3624f.

degree of descent from an emperor, were granted marquisates, except for those who inherited the kingdoms. Imperial princesses handed down their fiefs as marquisates to eldest sons. Royal daughters became princesses of districts or communes, but these fiefs lapsed with their deaths.[58]

With the unsuccessful uprising of the Seven Kingdoms in 154 B.C., the kings were stripped of all territorial power. Their fiefs were henceforth hardly distinguishable from regular commanderies, and were administered by government-appointed officials. From 145 B.C., the kings lost even the right to appoint their own senior household officials. The tutor (*fu*) was the king's moral guide in a mainly honorary capacity. The director of palace gentlemen (*lang-chung ling*) was in charge of bodyguards, messengers, and secretaries. The transport officer (*p'u*) was responsible for horses and carriages. There also were appointed a chief of the guards (*wei-shih chang*), who presumably commanded the guards at the gates to the royal palaces, a chief of ritual music (*li-yüeh chang*), a chief of sacrifices (*tz'u-ssu chang*), who was the prayer master, a chief physician (*i-kung chang*), and a chief of *yung-hsiang* (long lanes) (*yung-hsiang chang*), in charge of female slaves.

In A.D. 37, duchies (*kung-kuo*) were created for the supposed senior male descendants of the Shang-Yin and Chou dynasties, but nothing is known of their administration.[59] The highest nobles below the dukes were the marquises (*lieh-hou*) at rank twenty. Nobles of lesser ranks normally received no fiefs. The marquises were divided into three groups: the marquises of the imperial house (*wang-tzu hou*), the meritorious subjects (*kung-ch'en*), that is, men who had distinguished themselves in the service of the dynasty; and the relatives of imperial consorts (*wai-ch'i*). The totals for these categories have been preserved for A.D. 37 only, when they numbered 137, 365, and 45, respectively, or 547 in all.[60]

Each marquis received a fief consisting of a specified number of households in one or several counties, districts, or communes. Like the kings, he was expected to reside in his fief, but this was a regulation difficult to enforce. Marquises officially permitted to live in the capital were referred to as "serving at the spring and autumn courts" (*feng-ch'ao ch'ing*). These were in turn divided into three classes, on a falling scale of prestige: those specially advanced (*t'e-chin*), those admitted to court (*ch'ao-t'ing hou*), and those attending at sacrifices (*shih-tz'u hou*).[61]

58 *HS* 19A, p. 741; *HHS* (tr.) 28, p. 3627; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. III, pp. 22f. See also Chapter 2 above, pp. 126f.; and Chapter 7, pp. 476f.

59 *HHS* 1A, p. 38; *HHS* 1B, p. 61; *HHS* (tr.) 28, p. 3629.

60 For these figures, see *HHS* 1B, pp. 61–62. Information in this respect is less full for Later Han than for Former Han, owing to the incorporation of the genealogical tables as *HS* chapters 13–19, and the absence of corresponding chapters in *Hou-Han shu*. For the figures for Former Han, see Chapter 7 above, p. 477, Table 12.

61 *HHS* (tr.) 28, p. 3630.

The marquises had no influence on the administration of their fiefs, and merely received stipends. Their household officials were appointed by the central government. Later Han allowed a marquis of a thousand or more households one household assistant of (*chia-ch'eng*), and cadets (*shu-tzu*) who may have acted as bodyguards. For smaller marquisates, it appointed only cadets.

All kings, princesses, dukes, and marquises had, of course, large retinues of servants and slaves, but these were privately acquired and without bureaucratic standing.

Administration beyond the border

Later Han continued the custom of establishing dependent states (*shu-kuo*). These were no longer administered by agents of the central government, but were incorporated into the local administration. The dependent states, whose populations were preponderantly non-Chinese, functioned as buffers on the northern and western borders against the Hsiung-nu and the Ch'iang. Each was governed by a commandant (*tu-wei*), who at first was subordinated to the governor of an adjoining commandery, but from the middle of the dynasty became practically his equal.[62]

To deal with its neighbors beyond the borders, the Chinese government appointed a number of officials who were used as diplomats or military leaders as circumstances demanded. The office of colonel-protector of the Chiang (*hu Ch'iang hsiao-wei;* colonel-protector of the Tibetans) was permanently revived in A.D. 33, and that of colonel protector of the Wu-huan (*hu Wu-huan hsiao-wei*) in A.D. 49 or soon thereafter. Both commanded garrisons close to the border. Each received a staff of authority (*chieh*), which established him as a legitimate representative of the emperor, authorized to take independent action without waiting for approval from the central government. The colonel protecting the Wu-huan not only conducted affairs with the tribe of that name, but also dealt with the Hsien-pi. At seasonal markets he traded with the northern barbarians, especially to buy horses.[63]

In A.D. 50 the southern Hsiung-nu made peace with China and the emperor ceded them large territories in the northwest. That same year he appointed a leader of the gentleman of the palace in charge of the Hsiung-nu (*shih Hsiung-nu chung-lang chiang*). This official, who also was granted the staff of authority, had his headquarters in Mei-chi county in the Ordos

62 *HHS* (tr.) 28, p. 3621.
63 *HHS* (tr.) 28, p. 3626; and see Chapter 6 above, pp. 427, 439.

Region as China's chief diplomatic representative at the court of the southern *shan-yü*. In addition, he was responsible for relations with the northern Hsiung-nu. Aided by a lieutenant colonel (*fu hsiao-wei*), he commanded mounted troops and convicts whose sentences had been reduced to service in the border garrisons.[64]

The founder of Later Han had refused to reestablish the Chinese protectorate over the Western Regions, i.e., primarily the Tarim Basin and the Turfan Oasis. With the offensives against the Northern Hsiung-nu, the attitude changed, and from A.D. 89 onward China once more became the dominant power in Central Asia. A protector-general of the Western Regions (*Hsi-yü tu-hu*) and Wu and Chi colonels (*wu-chi hsiao-wei*) were after a false start again appointed from A.D. 92.[65] The meaning of the last two titles is debated. All commanded subordinate officers and bodies of troops. The office of the protector-general of the Western Regions was abolished in A.D. 107, whereafter the Wu and Chi colonels acted as China's chief representatives in Central Asia. Appointments to these posts continued to be made until almost the end of the dynasty, even though the Western Region slipped out of Chinese control after the middle of the second century A.D.

THE ARMY

Military conscription continued in Later Han. At the age of twenty-three, all able-bodied men were trained for one year in their home commanderies as infantry (*ts'ai-kuan;* skilled soldiers), cavalry (*chi-shih*), or sailors in warships (*lou-ch'uan-shih*). They served for another year as garrison conscripts (*shu-tsu*), either as guards (*wei-shih*) under the commandant of the palace guards in the capital or at the courts of kings, or as troops in the commanderies and at the frontier. After their two years of military service had been completed, they returned home and there formed a local militia which was mobilized during emergencies. From the age of fifty-six, the members of the militia were excused from further duties.[66]

The so-called Northern Army (*Pei-chün*) consisted of professional soldiers who were stationed at the capital for its defense. Since the unit was commanded by five colonels, it was also known as the Troops of the Five Colonels (*wu-hsiao ping*). There existed no Southern Army in Later Han

64 *HHS* 1B, pp. 77–78; *HHS* 89, pp. 2943f.

65 *HHS* 4, p. 173; *HHS* 19, p. 720. For the history of the protector-general's office in Former Han, see A. F. P. Hulsewé, *China in central Asia: The early stage 125B.C.–A.D.23* (Leiden, 1979), p. 79 note 63, and Chapter 6 above, p. 411.

66 See *HHS* (tr.) 28, p. 3624 note 1, for a citation from the *Han-kuan i*; and Michael Loewe, *Records of Han Administration* (Cambridge, 1967), Vol. I, pp. 162f.

times. That term had been used during the preceding dynasty to refer to the conscript guards under the commandant of the palace guards. The Northern Army was reorganized by Kuang-wu-ti, receiving its final form in A.D. 39.

The five colonels, each in charge of a separate encampment, were the colonel of garrison cavalry (*t'un-chi hsiao-wei*), the colonel of picked cavalry (*yüeh-chi hsiao-wei*), the colonel of infantry (*pu-ping hsiao-wei;* colonel of footsoldiers), the colonel of the Ch'ang River encampment, (*Ch'ang-shui hsiao-wei*), and the *she-sheng hsiao-wei,* "colonel of archers who shoot by sound." All troops seem to have been Chinese, except for the horsemen under the colonel of the Ch'ang River encampment who were recruited from among the Wu-huan and Hsiung-nu. The title of the colonel was an anachronism. During Former Han, an officer with this title had been stationed on the bank of the Ch'ang River, southeast of Ch'ang-an. The Later Han retained the title, even though the encampment had been moved to Lo-yang. A captain of the center, Northern Army (*pei-chün chung-hou*) inspected the five colonels and their encampments. The combined strength of the Northern Army was just over 4,000 officers and men.[67]

The encampment at Li-yang (*Li-yang ying*) on the northern plain, some 200 kilometers (130 miles) northeast of Lo-yang, belonged to the outer defenses of the imperial capital. It is documented from A.D. 43, and consisted of 1,000 footsoldiers and cavalrymen. Two additional encampments were established in A.D. 110, both in the Wei River valley of the northwest.[68] The encampment at Yung (*Yung-ying*) was just north of the middle course of the Wei, the Tiger's Teeth encampment (*Hu-ya ying*) farther east at Ch'ang-an, south of the river. Clearly, the two formed successive lines of defense, which were not always effective, for the lower Wei River valley. The Tiger's Teeth encampment was overrun and destroyed by the southern Hsiung-nu, Wu-huan, and Ch'iang in A.D. 140.[69]

During Former Han the commandant of passes (*kuan tu-wei*) had played an important role in guarding the passes giving access through the escarpment to the capital region in the northwest. This officer monitored travel through the passes and was responsible for defending them against all but major attacks. After the founder of Later Han had moved the capital to Lo-yang this post seemed to have become superfluous, and he abolished it

67 *HHS* 1B, pp. 53, 55, 66; *HHS* 18, p. 684; *HHS* 24, p. 859; *HHS* (tr.) 27, pp. 3612f.; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, p. 117.

68 *HHS* 18, p. 694; *HHS* 5, p. 215.

69 For these attacks, see *HHS* 6, p. 269; *HHS* 87, p. 2895; *HHS* 90, p. 2983. As long as the three encampments existed, their troops, just like the Northern Army, served not only for defensive but also for offensive purposes, and were repeatedly dispatched against foreign invaders and internal rebels.

in A.D. 33. But the emperor discovered that the heavy traffic to and from the northwest, particularly through the Han-ku Pass directly south of the Huang-ho, required supervision, and he again appointed a commandant of the Han-ku Pass (*Han-ku kuan tu-wei*) in A.D. 43.[70]

The office of *tu-Liao chiang-chün*, "general who crosses the Liao River," had existed under the Former Han for only twelve years: from 77 to 66 B.C. In A.D. 65 the Later Han reestablished it as a permanent position. In spite of his title, this general had nothing to do with the Liao River in the northeast; he commanded a garrison just north of the northwestern knee of the Yellow River in the Ordos region. It follows that he manned a section of the Great Wall, and that his garrison was interposed between the southern Hsiung-nu in northwestern China and the northern Hsiung-nu in Central Asia. The chief purpose was to prevent a reunification of these tribes.[71]

The military offices described so far belonged to the peacetime as well as wartime organizations. During major emergencies, when the militia was mobilized, the field commanders of divisions (*ying*) were normally given the rank of general (*chiang-chün*). Divisions were divided into regiments (*pu*) under colonels (*hsiao-wei*), regiments into companies (*ch'ü*) under captains (*chün-hou*), and companies into platoons (*t'un*) under platoon commanders (*t'un-chang*). There were many other officers with a variety of duties, and in practice probably no army was the exact copy of another. After the completion of the campaign for which they had been called up, the militia was demobilized.[72]

The greatest demobilization took place toward the end of, and after, the civil war. In the process of converting to peacetime organization, the government also dispensed with the services of the former field commanders. When, in the course of time, certain military titles were granted again, these had changed in character and had taken on a political significance. Ming-ti revived the title of *p'iao-chi chiang-chün* (general of agile cavalry) in A.D. 57 and granted it to a full younger brother. Ling-ti filled the same office with a maternal first cousin in A.D. 188. Neither of the two incumbents was a real general; they had received these appointments as honorary sinecures.[73]

The title of *chü-chi chiang-chün* (general of chariots and cavalry) was revived in A.D. 77.[74] The appointees went out on campaigns until A.D. 110, but in their selection preference was given to imperial distaff relatives,

70 For the *kuan tu-wei*, see *HHS* 1B, pp. 55, 72; Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, pp. 61, 107.
71 *HS* 7, p. 230 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 171); *HS* 19B, pp. 796, 803; *HHS* 2, p. 110.
72 *HHS* (tr.) 24, p. 3564. 73 *HHS* 2, p. 96; *HHS* 8, p. 356.
74 *HHS* 3, p. 135.

TABLE 14

Later Han regents

Tou Hsien	29 October 89–14 August 92
Teng Chih	18 January 109–October/November 110
Keng Pao	16 September 124–24 May 125
Liang Shang	19 May 135–22 September 141
Liang Chi	28 September 141–9 September 159
Tou Wu	30 January 168–25 October 168
Ho Chin	1 April 184–22 September 189

two of whom were promoted from this post directly to the regency. After A.D. 110 field commanders received the office only during emergencies. At all other times, the incumbents were either imperial relatives or eunuchs, so that this generalship also became a sinecure used for political ends.

The title of general-in-chief (*ta chiang-chün*) had been granted to certain prominent field commanders during the civil war, but had then been dispensed with. When it was reintroduced in A.D. 89, it became synonymous with regent. The first and last of the regents conducted military campaigns while exercising their political functions. None of the others had anything to do with military affairs; they were political appointees who controlled the government in the name of the throne. Seven such regents held power in the course of Later Han, as shown in Table 14.[75] The regent was equal to the three excellencies in rank but superior to them in power. His headquarters in Lo-yang formed in practice the chief ministry, organized in the customary bureaus.

CIVIL SERVICE RECRUITMENT

Later Han civil service recruitment was a refinement of the Former Han system. The greatest honor continued to be imperial summons for possible appointment to office. Such a summons could be declined, though it was difficult to thwart stubborn emperors.

Edicts at irregular intervals ordered, as before, the recommendation of men with certain moral traits or technical skills.[76] These men were nor-

75 *HHS* 4, p. 169; *HHS* 5, pp. 211, 240; *HHS* 6, pp. 264, 271; *HHS* 8, pp. 328, 348; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, p. 124; see Chapter 3 above, p. 282.

76 Many of these edicts have been assembled together in *Tung Han hui-yao* 26. For further details of the system of recruitment, see Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 132f. See also Rafe de Crespigny, "The recruitment system of the imperial bureaucracy of the late Han." *Chung-chi Journal*, 6:1 (1966), pp. 67–78.

mally given an examination upon arrival in the capital. Of greater importance, each grand administrator of a commandery and chancellor of a kingdom as a matter of routine recommended two men as "filially pious and incorrupt" (*hsiao-lien*) in their reports at a year's end. Such men could be in office already. They usually underwent a probationary period as gentlemen in one of the Three Corps, and they were then given an official posting. Since this method of recruitment discriminated against populous units, quotas were introduced in A.D. 92. Commanderies and kingdoms henceforth recommended two *hsiao-lien* candidates for each 200,000 inhabitants, one man each second year for populations below 200,000, and one man each third year for populations below 100,000. To favor the sparsely inhabited northern border commanderies, it was further ordered in A.D. 101 that each of these should recommend one man every other year if its population was less than 100,000 or one man every third year if its population was less than 50,000. It follows that 250 to 300 men were recommended annually by this method.[77]

Before A.D. 132 the *hsiao-lien* did not have to undergo a written examination. It was decreed in that year that all must be examined, and that, excepting younger men of unusual promise, the age of the candidates had to be forty years or more. The examinations were graded by the ministries of the three excellencies and by the secretariat.[78]

When the Former Han had issued edicts at irregular intervals inviting the recommendation of candidates for office, "flourishing talent" (*hsiu-ts'ai*) had been among the required characteristics. The term was changed to "abundant talent" (*mao-ts'ai*) after the restoration in order to avoid the tabooed personal name of Kuang-wu-ti. He ordered, in A.D. 36, that the recommendation of *mao-ts'ai* should become an annual routine, and that one such recommendation should be made by each of the three excellencies, by the superintendent of the palace, the colonel, internal security, and the regional commissioners. This means that seventeen men were recommended annually by this method. Some regents may later have enjoyed the same privilege. *Mao-ts'ai* normally were officials already. They did not have to serve as gentlemen in the Three Corps, and as a rule they were soon promoted to higher posts.[79]

A rival system of official recruitment was initiated by Ling-ti in A.D.

77 *HHS* 4, p. 189; *HHS* 37, p. 1268. 78 *HHS* 6, p. 261.

79 See *HHS* (tr.) 24, p. 3559 note 2 for the citation of the edict of A.D. 36, ordering the recruitment of *mao-ts'ai* (not recorded in *HHS* 1B). For the use of the term *mao-ts'ai* by a writer of the Later Han period, in deference to the taboo, see *HS* 6, pp. 197, 198 note 7 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 97); and *HS* 8, p. 258 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 238). The term *hsiu-ts'ai* has, however, survived in *HS* 88, p. 3594.

178, when he founded the School at the Gate of the Vast Capital (Hung-tu-men hsüeh). It was located in one of the palace compounds of Lo-yang. The three excellencies, and the officials in charge of the regions, commanderies, and kingdoms, were ordered to make apparently annual recommendations of suitable candidates. These were trained in calligraphy, *fu* poetry, and the writing of government documents, and then appointed to office. The school was met with hostility from all vested interests, but the emperor insisted on maintaining it.[80]

In Former Han high officials (ranking at two thousand bushels or over) had enjoyed the right after three full years in office of entering a brother, half-brother, son, or nephew as a gentleman into the Three Corps. This custom was frowned upon as not being based on merit, and it was abolished in 7 B.C. The founder of Later Han revived it. In addition, both Han dynasties permitted officials to recommend worthy men on their own initiative, but they risked punishment if their candidates were found wanting.[81]

All officials heading the ministries in the capital, or in charge of provinces, commanderies, kingdoms, and counties in the local administration, were in practice free to appoint their own subordinates. If these were competent and lucky, they could be promoted to the higher levels of the civil service. This was, numerically, the most important avenue into official employment.

In Former Han times students at the Academy had been able to enter the civil service by way of special examinations. Information is incomplete for Later Han, but we can be fairly certain that, considering the vast numbers of students, the majority had to seek nominations or employment on their own.[82]

It was, finally, possible to purchase office, although this method was in ill repute. It is not to be confused with a government policy, promulgated in A.D. 178, according to which high officials had to make forced contributions, either before taking up their new posts or later, on the installment plan.[83]

POWER IN GOVERNMENT

The wielding of power in Han China was based on the principle that no one should have too much of it. The emperor shared power with the

80 *HHS* 8, pp. 340, 341 note 1; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, p. 141. For the emergence and forms of *fu* poetry, sometimes termed "rhapsody," see Yves Hervouet, *Un poète de cour sous les Han: Sseu-ma Siang-jou* (Paris, 1964), pp. 135, 211f.; and David R. Knechtges, *The Han Rhapsody: A study of the* Fu *of Yang Hsiung (53 B.C.–A.D. 18)* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 12f.

81 Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 132–33.

82 For the Academy, see Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 138f.; and Chapter 7 above, p. 464.

83 *HHS* 8, p. 342; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 141–42.

officials, and the officials shared it with each other. During Former Han the chancellor had been the highest-ranking official in the career bureaucracy until 8 B.C., and had been able to face the emperor with the might of his office behind him. The tripartite and coequal division of authority among the three excellencies from that year onward made such a stand more difficult but not impossible, and soon the supreme commander came to fill the vacuum as the most influential one of the three.

A counterpoint to the three excellencies was the secretariat, consisting of its officials and their bureaus, on which the founder of Later Han and his successors relied heavily.[84] It was outranked by the three excellencies, but being closer to the throne, equaled or exceeded them in power. The secretariat and the three excellencies, in a sense, formed rival cabinets. The eunuchs, who had no institutional authority outside the palace, identified with the throne in order to survive themselves, and this came to enhance their own role in government. The relative influence of the emperor, the three excellencies, the secretariat, and the eunuchs varied from period to period, depending on personalities, individual preferences, and factional struggles.[85]

Emperors content with playing a more passive role, or wishing to lessen their burden of governmental duties, delegated some of their authority. This was commonly done by concurrently appointing a high official as intendant of the secretariat (*lu shang-shu shih;* intendant of the masters of writing). It meant that he, instead of the emperor, supervised the imperial secretariat. Before the collapse of orderly government in A.D. 189, nine supreme commanders and two ministers of finance were made intendants of the secretariat, which led to a certain fusion of the two cabinets. In addition, all but the first two of the grand tutors were entrusted with the same responsibility, and this explains why they gained political power. But the government was well aware of the danger involved in giving too much power to a single official, and therefore normally divided the intendantship of the secretariat between two or even three high officials. This method had been resorted to only twice in Former Han; it was the pattern in Later Han.

A further element in the power equation was the regency. The general-in-chief or regent, whether appointed by an emperor or an empress dowager, was the chief representative of the throne, but did not possess all of its power. He shared authority with an emperor or empress dowager, and generally not without some tension. It is significant that among the seven regents, none of the first four was given the intendantship of the secretariat, and that the remaining three held it jointly with others. Only the fifth

84 See Chapter 7 above, pp. 466f. 85 For example, see Chapter 4 above, pp. 287f.

regent, Liang Chi, succeeded in shedding his co-intendants, and from the end of A.D. 147 until 159 was the sole intendant. This is the reason for the unusual power that he wielded.

Attempts by regents to increase their influence over and above the institutional limits set them on a collision course with the throne. It began with manipulation of the imperial succession, and ended with total confrontation. The two last regents allied themselves with elements in the career bureaucracy, not their normal supporters, for the purpose of massacring the eunuchs and gaining physical control over the emperor. Both were outsmarted and destroyed by the eunuchs who, forced by self-interest, became the last defenders of the throne.

CONCLUSION

Later Han institutions, as described by the sources, were no utopia, but a practical and functioning system. They had evolved from the institutions of Ch'in and Former Han, and in the process had become more complex and sophisticated. Changes occurred for better and worse. The bureaucracy grew in size. The new ministry of works may have stimulated public works. The amalgamation of the private and public purses was undoubtedly intended to improve management, but led to financial irregularities. Replacement of scrutiny of public performance by the imperial counsellor and his ministry by the tripartite supervision of the three excellencies; transfer of the assistant to the imperial counsellor to the ministry of the lesser treasury; and shifting the provincial inspectors to the local administration, all contributed toward decentralization and a reduction in the government's supervisory function. The increasing importance of the imperial secretariat, the supreme commander, and the grand tutor produced new kinds of bureaucratic compromise. The emergence of an influential eunuch hierarchy was a response to the abuse by consort families of their power.

In summary, Later Han institutions not only possessed a fundamental stability, based on the principle of checks and balances, but also adaptability and the capacity to grow. They formed the most impressive system of government in the world at the time, and for centuries to come.

CHAPTER 9

CH'IN AND HAN LAW

SOURCES

According to tradition, codified law existed in China from a rather early date. A penal code may have been available at least since the eighth century before the beginning of our era.[1] It seems logical to connect this codification with the growth of the large centralized states – which gradually came to replace the multitude of small, archaic states – and the development of a true bureaucracy in these new political entities. However, with one notable exception, these codes, as well as the codes of the later empires, have been mostly lost. The earliest code we possess in its entirety is the T'ang penal code of 653 in its revised version of 725, and hundreds of T'ang administrative rules. Most of what we know of the law of the earlier period has been gathered from quotations and other information contained in historical and literary works and, to a certain extent, from inscriptions and from documents discovered by archeologists. In this way, we possess a number of quotations from the earlier laws and a considerable body of case law.

Except for the recently discovered collection of part of the Ch'in laws, our main sources are the histories devoted to the succeeding dynasties which ruled over the whole or over different parts of China after 202 B.C.; especially important are the treatises on penal law in several of these histories, which contain the most important codifications and revisions during

I wish to express my thanks to the late Professor S. Szirmai of Leiden University and to Dr. Michael Loewe for their valuable suggestions.

1 For a general survey of the place of law in Chinese institutions and society, see Ch'ü T'ung-tsu, *Law and society in traditional China* (Paris and The Hague, 1961); and Derk Bodde, "Basic concepts of Chinese law: The genesis and evolution of legal thought in traditional China," in his *Essays on Chinese civilization*, ed. Charles Le Blanc and Dorothy Borei (Princeton, 1981), pp. 171–94. For the earliest codifications, see A. F. P. Hulsewé, "The Legalists and the laws of Ch'in," in *Leyden studies in Sinology*, ed. W. L. Idema (Leiden, 1981), p. 3. For the collection and interpretation of the surviving fragments of Han law and a translation of the treatise on penal law in the *Han shu*, see A. F. P. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han law* (Leiden, 1955); and for a translation of that treatise into Japanese, see Uchida Tomoo, *Kanjo keihō shi* (Kyoto, 1958). A. F. P. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law: An annotated translation of the Ch'in legal and administrative rules of the 3rd century* B.C. *discovered in Yün-meng Prefecture, Hu-pei Province in* 1975 (Leiden, 1985), presents a translation of the recently discovered fragments of laws of the Ch'in period; references given below to the items of these documents follow the classification in that work.

the period under survey, as well as extracts of discussions and of notable cases. These historical works are the *Shih-chi* (Historical records), by Ssu-ma Ch'ien (ca. 100 B.C.), the *Han shu* (History of the Former Han dynasty), by Pan Ku (A.D. 32–92), the *Hou-Han shu* (History of the Later Han dynasty), by Fan Yeh (398–436), and a number of later works. What makes their testimony all the more important is that they provide extracts of official documents, and often quote these verbatim; the reliability of these quotations – and of the faithfulness of the tradition of these works as a whole – has been proved by archeological finds. The early commentators of these histories as well as those of the canonical texts have given us quite a number of quotations of legal rules when explaining obscure and lapidary passages of the text. The credit for having assembled the material concerning the codes of the early Chinese empires and the pertaining case law belongs to Chinese and Japanese scholars. The earliest attempt was made in China toward the end of the thirteenth century; this type of research was resumed only towards the end of the nineteenth century, but it was undertaken then on a much larger scale and with excellent results. What follows is mainly based on the painstaking work of these scholars, especially Shen Chia-pen and Ch'eng Shu-te, who were active in the early decades of the twentieth century, and on archeological discoveries.

For the period before the establishment of the unified empire in 221 B.C., the situation would seem to be quite similar, for here too we possess quite a number of works – literary, philosophical, and historical – from which it would be possible to cull statements concerning law and legal institutions. However, the problems of dating these texts are extremely complex and far from solved, whereas the work of textual criticism has hardly been started.[2] Consequently it is impossible to provide a coherent outline for the legal institutions of this period on this basis alone. However, the situation has been dramatically improved during the last few years by the discovery and publication of considerable remains of manuscript copies of laws of the Ch'in kingdom.[3]

2 For a consideration of these writings, see Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 18f.

3 These documents were discovered in 1975 in a tomb datable to 217 B.C. and situated some 75 kilometers (forty-five miles) northwest of Wuhan, Hupei. For details concerning this discovery and for the various publications of these texts in modern characters, see A. F. P. Hulsewé, "The Ch'in documents discovered in Hupei in 1975," *TP*, 64:4–5 (1978), 177f.; and Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, Introduction. For the Chinese text, references are to Shui-hu-ti Ch'in-mu chu-chien cheng-li hsiao-tsu, *Shui-hu-ti Ch'in-mu chu-chien* (Peking, 1978); this publication is to be distinguished from the folio edition with the same title, published in 1977. According to preliminary reports received while these pages were in press, the texts of the laws of Ch'in have now been supplemented by a further discovery of legal documents, dating from the first decades of Former Han. These finds amount to over 500 strips from tomb M 247, Chiang-chia-shan, Chiang-ling (Hupei province); see Chang-chia-shan Han-mu chu-chien cheng-li hsiao-tsu, "Chiang-ling Chang-chia-shan Han-chien kai-shu," *WW*, 1985.1, 9–15.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Early Chinese law is the law of a fully developed archaic society. It is archaic to the extent that it shows certain traits that belong to what has been called "primitive" thought; in other respects it is purely rational in the modern sense.

Chinese thought since before the Han period, as well as in the succeeding centuries, shows itself explicitly to be dominated by the idea of the interaction and the interdependence among all parts of the universe, with the result that the acts of man were considered to affect the world; in this way the behavior of the ruler made itself felt in nature, while even the acts of the commoner might have similar reactions. Natural phenomena considered as unusual or untimely were consequently seen in this way as signs that the times were out of joint.[4]

In accordance with the view that man's actions had to be closely adapted to the cosmic process so as to preserve harmony with nature to the benefit of mankind, executions could take place only in the season of death and decay; that is, in autumn and winter, and not during spring, as this would hamper flowering and growth and so cause disasters. It is interesting to observe that for a man condemned to death to have "passed beyond winter" meant that he would not suffer execution; it explains the indecent haste which officials sometimes showed in trying to finish capital suits before the beginning of spring.[5]

This conception of the world and man's place in it leads to the view that acts which, by disrupting harmony, cause an imbalance have to be counterbalanced by another act so as to cancel them. In this way the crime has to be counterbalanced by the punishment, as is shown by the use of terms like *tang* (to outweigh, to be adequate to) or *pao* (to requite); the crime is "outweighed" or "requited, repaid" by the punishment, and so the original harmony, disturbed by the wrongful act, is restored.[6]

A highly important principle derives from this concept: when a wrongful act has occurred, it must be corrected; punishment ineluctably follows the crime. Somebody – of course, the perpetrator of the deed when he could be traced – was held accountable for the act, theoretically regardless of age, sex, or condition. In the early period we therefore see lunatics, for example, being condemned to death; this attitude was only slightly softened in later times.[7]

4 For the development of these trends of thought, see Chapter 12 below, pp. 696f., 710f.; and Michael Loewe, *Chinese ideas of life and death: Faith, myth and reason in the Han period* (202 B.C.–A.D. 220) (London, 1982), Chapters 4 and 8. 5 See Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 103–09.

6 For the expression of this view by Tung Chung-shu, see *HS* 56, pp. 2500f.

7 See Hulsewé, *Remnants*, p. 301.

Ancient texts[8] assume unambiguously the existence of strictly hierarchical principles whereby Chinese society was organized and shaped, as it were, like a pyramid. This type of organization continued to prevail during the empires, and although the god-kingship of a distant past had many centuries ago been transmuted into rule by secular princes, the person of the ruler continued to be surrounded by religious awe. Consequently, undertakings against his person or his government were considered to be heinous crimes. The same atmosphere surrounded his dwelling place and his tomb, as well as places more directly concerned with religion; untoward events there were taken more seriously than when they happened on less sacred soil. In the same way the hierarchic principle remained in force within the family, resulting in a difference in the appreciation of acts by descendants against ascendants and by seniors against juniors; maltreatment of parents and, of course, parricide and matricide fell under the category of heinous and hence unpardonable crimes. The same standards were applied to governors and the persons they governed, teacher and pupils, owner and slaves.

Another archaic phenomenon was the undivided responsibility of the group for acts committed by one of its members.[9] Especially in the case of heinous crimes, family members of the evildoer also suffered punishment, sometimes death, sometimes enslavement. An outgrowth of this originally archaic trait in later ages was the dismissal of government personnel whose appointment had been due to the guilty party.[10]

However, there were other tendencies at work. In the first place, the hierarchic principle already mentioned could on occasion lead to a mitigation or an increase of punishment. Of greater interest is the distinction, already known in the pre-imperial period, made between intent and negligence. The judges differentiated between *tsei-sha* (murderous killing; with malice aforethought) or *ku-sha* (wittingly killing) and *wu* (by mistake) and *kuo-shih* (by accident). The two latter categories were also applied in cases other than homicide.[11]

Another distinction is drawn between the *auctor intellectualis*, that is, *shou* (the head or leader) and the person who actually performed the deed, i.e., *shou-sha* (killed with his own hands), or *ts'ung* (followers – the accomplices). Various terms, such as *chiao* (to instruct), *shih* (to cause), or *ling* (to order), denoted instigation.[12]

Notwithstanding the archaic traits, the main body of the laws was

8 For example, the genuine parts of the *Shu-ching* (Book of documents), the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (Spring and autumn annals), and the *Tso-chuan*.

9 See Chapter 1 above, pp. 36f. 10 See Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 271f.

11 For details, see Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 251f. See also *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 65f., 169, 264 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, D27, D28f., D35, D36f., and E20); and Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, Introduction. 12 See Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 265–70.

rational and political, consisting of specific regulations aimed at the smooth functioning of government and the maintenance of its stability by the preservation of law and order in society. These rules represent a great step in the process of secularization of Chinese society. They are far from archaic and are no longer based only on "natural law" or on time-hallowed custom and usage; they are quite clearly expressions of the will of the ruler. They constitute a body of rules with purely pragmatic connotations, uniformly applicable to the whole population except in those spheres where the hierarchic principle continued to apply.

It must be noted, however, that the scope of these exceptions grew as time went on. In the first place kings, who were by definition scions of the imperial family, were but rarely touched by the law, despite the remonstrances of the ministers, as the emperor "could not bear" to have them punished. Of greater importance was the very early rule that the emperor's permission had to be asked before legal proceedings could be opened against officials in the higher echelons of the imperial administration.[13] With the growth of the power of the local magnates, at least from the first century of the present era onward, the scope of these exceptions grew constantly wider. Eventually it came to embrace practically the whole of the landowning upper stratum of society, usually called the gentry, from which practically all the scholar-officials originated. The ancient nobility of the predynastic period had long since disappeared; the marquises of the Ch'in-Han period had titles but no real fiefs, and consequently no power. The new magnates gradually assumed the privileges of their distant forerunners, as described in the Confucian classics, especially in the handbooks on ritual. But regulations like these never formed an obstacle for the will – or the whims – of the ruler.

The hierarchic principle should not be confused with status, at least during the Han dynasty. The orders of honor (*chüeh*) which were conferred during the Ch'in and Han periods carried with them several privileges, including that of a reduction in punishment for crime; but the marquises, or nobles, enjoyed no special status other than that of holders of the highest orders.[14] A further distinction of status, one which may have been no more than theoretical, was that between free persons (*shu-min*; commoners) and slaves. During the period of dynastic disunity that followed Han, the great magnate families did come to enjoy a special status, while there were also developments in unfree status. Slaves continued to exist, but several groups

13 Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 285f.

14 For the orders of honor, see Chapter 2 above, pp. 157f.; and Chapter 7, pp. 484f. For the reduction of punishment for holders of these honors, see Michael Loewe, "The orders of aristocratic rank of Han China," *TP*, 48:1–3 (1960), 155f.; and Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 214–22.

came into being between them and the free population. None of these was entirely free, but they were not so lowly as the slaves. They included serflike tenants (*k'o*) and the *pu-ch'ü*, originally men serving in the many private armies of those days, who came to constitute a class of unfree servants.[15]

. The slave population never seems to have assumed large proportions; C. Martin Wilbur has shown that during the Former Han period their number cannot have exceeded 1 percent of the whole population of approximately 60 million and that it was probably less.[16] Private slaves were mostly engaged in household duties and rarely in productive tasks; Chinese and Japanese scholars have convincingly shown that in agriculture tenants were economically more profitable for their employer than slaves.[17] These private slaves were the products of debt slavery and of trade; the "barbarian" southwestern regions seem to have been a major source, war captives less so.[18] Government slaves were relatives or dependents of persons executed for a heinous crime; they were put to work in government offices, apparently to perform menial services, as well as in mines and foundries.

It is characteristic for the whole of traditional Chinese law as embodied in the codes that it is solely concerned with public matters, being administrative and penal. Private law, pertaining to the family and to trade and commerce other than the state monopolies, remained outside the field of regimentation by public authority and continued to be ruled by custom and usage. Part of the custom regarding the family was enshrined in the texts which belonged to the Confucian canon, especially the *Li-chi* (Book of Rites), but the Confucianization of society, and of the law codes, was a slow process which found only partial fulfillment in the T'ang code in the seventh century A.D. As a result of this concern with public law, our sources provide much data on administrative and penal regulations, but very little on family and commercial usage.

THE CODES

In contrast to many other peoples, the Chinese never attributed their laws to a divine lawgiver. Among the sparse legendary material there occurs a

15 For social developments of this type, see Chapter 11 below, pp. 629f.; Lien-sheng Yang, "Great families of the Eastern Han," in *Chinese social history*, ed. E-tu Zen Sun and John De Francis (Washington, DC), pp. 103–34; and Yang Chung-i, "Evolution of the status of 'dependents,' " in *ibid.*, pp. 142–56.

16 Clarence Martin Wilbur, *Slavery in China during the Former Han dynasty* (Chicago, 1943), pp. 165f. See also Ch'ü T'ung-tsu, *Han social structure*, ed. Jack L. Dull (Seattle and London, 1972), pp. 135f.

17 For example, see Chien Po-tsan, "Kuan-yü liang Han ti kuan ssu nu-pi wen-t'i," *LSYC*, 1954.4, 1–24; and Utsunomiya Kiyoyoshi, *Kandai shakai keizaishi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1955), pp. 359f.

18 A Ch'in law stipulates that "enemies who surrender are made bond servants"; *Shui-hu-ti*, p. 146 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, C23b).

series of "inventors" and "makers," and among them we find a legendary minister of justice of one of the equally legendary emperors, who is said to have made the first code. In connection with punishment there is the expression "Heaven's punishment," which the founders of Chou in the eleventh century B.C. proclaimed they were applying to the dastardly last ruler of Shang.[19] But with this seeming exception, laws seem to have been entirely a human affair. The same is true for the rules which governed the whole of life, and which therefore might legitimately also be called "laws"; no divine origin is found for *li* (rules of correct behavior) either.

Curiously enough, there does not exist an unambiguous term for "law." The word *fa*, often translated as "law," means primarily "norm" or "model"; *lü*, the word usually rendered as "statute," originally seems to have meant "standard pitchpipe."[20] However, the school of political philosophers of the fourth and third centuries B.C. who wished to rely on written rules when using rewards and punishments to maintain peace and order are called the *Fa-chia*, the Legalists. It should be noted in passing that in spite of their preoccupation with law, hardly a legal rule is to be found in their voluminous writings.

About the codes of predynastic China, therefore, hardly anything was known until in December 1975 a part of the laws of Ch'in, dating from the fourth or third centuries B.C., was discovered in a tomb.[21] This collection contains articles from nearly thirty statutes (*lü*) mentioned by title, although it was only a selection for the use of a subordinate local official.

The new Han code was compiled in 200 B.C.; it is ascribed to the chancellor Hsiao Ho, one of the prominent supporters of the founder of the dynasty. He is said to have enlarged the Ch'in code of six chapters by three new chapters, the nine chapters all being concerned with criminal matters, with two pertaining to procedure.[22] Throughout the ages, down to the fall of the empire, the code was in principle a criminal code, consisting of *lü* (statutes); after the Han period all other rules were called *ling* (ordinances) and *ko* (rulings), sometimes *shih* (models), and often *chih* (decrees). During the Han period no such subdivision existed, and we find the same law referred to as both "statute" and "ordinance," the appellation depending solely on the antiquity of the rule. And whereas the Han code continued to

19 See Hulsewé, *Remnants*, p. 27; and Bernhard Karlgren, "The Book of documents," *BMFEA*, 22 (1950), 18.

20 For the significance of the pitchpipes as instruments that disclosed the stages reached in the universal cycle of being, see Derk Bodde, "The Chinese cosmic magic known as watching for the ethers," in his *Essays on Chinese civilization*, ed. Charles Le Blanc and Dorothy Borei (Princeton, 1981), pp. 351–72.

21 See note 3 above.

22 *Han shu* 1B, p. 80 (Homer H. Dubs, *The History of the Former Han dynasty* [Baltimore, 1938–55], Vol. I, p. 146); *HS* 23, p. 1096 (Hulsewé, *Remnants*, p. 333); Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 26f.

be referred to as the "nine statutes," we find reference to several dozens of different statutes in our sources. The number of ordinances referred to is twenty-seven, but some of these are also found as statutes, while others seem to have been brief compendia for the use of particular regional authorities.

These figures cannot give an indication of the size of the written legislation; for that we have to turn to occasional references. Sometimes such figures refer to the whole legislation, both administrative and penal, sometimes only to the latter. In this way we find the figure of 960 rolls (*chüan*) for the whole of the Han rules, and[23]

> 490 articles for the death penalty (containing 1,882 offenses, with 3,472 [one source writes 13,472] analogies or pieces of case law), and for articles to be used in deciding punishment 26,272 articles or 7,732,200 words.

Consequently, we find complaints in both the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. that:[24]

> writings and documents filled tables and cupboards, to the effect that even officials well versed in the law did not know what to apply; the legal texts gathered dust and became moth-eaten on the shelves, as nobody was able to peruse them all.

For the later period we only know the number of articles in the criminal code, which was 1,522 in the Chin code of A.D. 268, 2,529 early in the sixth century in south China (Liang), but only 832 in the north under the alien Wei. This was standardized at 500 articles under the Sui dynasty in 583 and under the following T'ang dynasty, owing to the influence of this classical figure from the venerated *Book of documents*.[25]

As stated above, we do not know the exact extent of the administrative rules of the Han empire; for Chin and later we have information concerning the chapter headings, and thence the subject matter. For the T'ang dynasty we know that in 624 the ordinances (*ling*) alone contained 1,546 articles.

The general impression obtained from our sources, including the quotations from the code and the discussions, is that the new codes proclaimed at the beginning of each dynasty were never really new creations; on the whole, the code of the preceding period was taken over with only incidental and usually slight modifications. This was because most dynastic changes meant replacing one set of men by another of the same type whose ideals of government remained unaltered. This principle holds true even for the

23 These figures are given in the sixth century *Wei shu* 111, p. 2872; Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 52f.
24 *HS* 23, p. 1101 (Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 338, 389 note 199).
25 Details are given in Étienne Balazs, *Le Traité juridique du "Souei chou"* (Leiden, 1954), pp. 208–09.

alien dynasties which ruled over North China during the period of dynastic division; their tribal customs soon gave way to the traditional Chinese institutions.

THE JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES

Traditional China, like many other premodern societies – as well as many colonial administrations of the recent past – ignored the sharp division between administrative and judicial authority; in the majority of cases the administrator of a region was at the same time the sole judge of the area under his direction.[26] In general it may be said that a superior of any kind was the master of his inferiors as well as being their judge. Hence, commanding generals were the supreme judges for their subordinates, even in matters of life and death. And in the same way, the county magistrate (*hsien-ling* or *hsien-chang*) was the county judge, and the governor (*shou* or *t'ai-shou*) the judge of his commandery.[27] There resulted the curious situation whereby the latter two were in charge of judicial affairs for the same area, but one never hears of a struggle for competence; this is because in criminal matters it seems to have been the rule that the authority which arrested the criminal also judged him. We even hear of governors of commanderies admonishing their subordinate county magistrates to be diligent in criminal matters so as to avoid the necessity for interference by their superiors.

Because the superintendent of ceremonial (*t'ai-ch'ang*) was in charge of the administration of the counties in which imperial tombs with their surrounding settlements were located, this member of the select group of the nine ministers was also the judge for these areas.[28]

Another of the nine ministers, the superintendent of trials (*t'ing-wei;* commandant of justice) was both the supreme judge and, with the theoretical exception of the emperor, the final authority of appeal. The texts show him acting in the capacity of judge in matters pertaining to the safety both of the ruler and of the realm in cases of attempted regicide and rebellion, as well as in cases in which the kings, marquises, or high-ranking officials were involved.[29] At the same time, it was to him that were referred "doubtful cases" in which the administrators had been unable to find the correct verdict. However, jurisdiction over the emperor's servants, such as

26 For a detailed study of the judicial authorities, see Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 81f.
27 For the subordination of these units and their official establishment, see Chapter 7, p. 475.
28 For the superintendent of ceremonial, see Chapter 7, p. 468, Chapter 8, pp. 493f.
29 See A. F. P. Hulsewé, "The function of the commandant of justice during the Han period," (forthcoming). This article also shows that the word *t'ing* in the title does not have the usual meaning "court," but "equity" or "justice."

high-ranking ministers and their staff in the capital, and the governors and magistrates in the provinces, was not in his hands, but in those of a subordinate of the chancellor.[30]

In the end, the emperor was, of course, the supreme judge; how far he availed himself of his powers depended on his character. In actual fact, he was more than a judge and fountainhead of justice; he was also the supreme lawgiver, and his will – or whim – could override any existing regulations or immunities. As emperor he could likewise order officials who normally did not possess judicial authority to participate in law cases, particularly in cases of rebellion.

The nobility – the kings and marquises or nobles – had no judicial authority, although in the early years of the Han dynasty, during the first half of the second century before our era, encroachments in this sphere by the kings were evidently tolerated. But after the unsuccessful rebellion of the kings in 154 B.C. and the ensuing abolition of their entire powers, they were rigorously excluded from all judicial activities, as they were from all other administrative matters.[31] It is to be noted explicitly that the marquises had never had any voice in the administration of their domains, let alone in the administration of justice. They were merely entitled to a part of the tax revenues of the area with which they had been enfeoffed, and even these financial matters were administered by the actual governors of the area, the imperially appointed magistrates who also took care of the administration of justice.[32]

If the governors and county magistrates were the sole judges for the area they governed, they were not alone in handling judicial matters. At both commandery and county level, there existed several offices to assist them in this task. But while our sources show that these were staffed by men well versed in the law, they are practically silent about the way in which these offices functioned. The same applies to the highest of these offices, viz. the Bureau of banditry (*tsei ts'ao*). This was established in the capital, where the emperor's confidential clerks, the members of the secretariat, deliberated on difficult cases, perhaps in collaboration with the superintendent of trials.

The dispensation of justice by the local magistrates was prevented from becoming arbitrary by the regular control exercised by the central government.[33] In the first instance the whole of their administration was

30 That is, the *ssu-chih*, sometimes rendered "director of uprightness" or "inspector of straightness." See Hans Bielenstein, *The bureaucracy of Han times* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 8, 12. For the reference of cases to the emperor, see Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 294f.

31 For the rebellion of 154, see Chapter 2 above, pp. 141f. See also A. F. P. Hulsewé, "Royal rebels," *BEFEO*, 69 (1981), 315–25.

32 For the marquisates, or nobilities, see Chapter 2 above, pp. 157f.; and Chapter 8, pp. 508f.

33 Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 91f.

subject to inspection by the *tz'u-shih*, the "probing clerks," usually called regional inspectors, who were first appointed in 106 B.C. These officials, who were directly subordinated to the chief imperial secretary, traveled through the vast areas under their care, reporting annually, in the tenth month, on conditions there. One of the points they were required to look into was the fairness and impartiality of the verdicts pronounced by civil servants, the great danger being their collusion with local magnates, to the detriment of the lesser folk. In addition to the regular inspections by the regional inspectors, there might be unexpected visits by the referees attached during some periods to the superintendent of trials with the express purpose of providing equity in judgments, or by emissaries of the emperor especially charged with the rectification of unjust verdicts. Finally, the accused and his relations could lodge an appeal, but the sources do not provide further details on this subject.[34]

Justice could also be meted out in the private sphere – in the exercise of the *patria potestas* in the extended sense, and in taking revenge. The head of the household was entitled to punish its members, but theoretically at least he was not allowed to mutilate or to kill them; capital punishment, even for slaves, was to be left to the magistrate.[35] Revenge was a sacred duty, stressed by the classics, both for the filial son and the loyal subject, but it was frowned upon by the state, which tried to prevent it. Punishment of persons guilty of taking revenge grew heavier as the period under survey comes to a close; it could involve conviction of members of the family, but the sources show that public sympathy was wholly on the side of the accused.

We are but poorly informed on the function of the magistrates in the sphere of private law. Duplicates of deeds of sale concerning important objects, such as land, slaves, and cattle, had to be filed with the authorities, mainly because of their importance for taxation.[36] We also know that disputes about land were occasionally brought before the county magistrate; from the context it seems that in these cases the magistrate acted more as an arbiter than as a judge. The existence of land registers during the early period may be assumed; rather sophisticated Han maps have been found, but we do not know whether these were also available at the office of the county magistrate or, even lower, at that of subordinate units.[37]

34 See Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 79–80. For the *tz'u-shih*, see Chapter 7 above, p. 475, and Chapter 8 above, p. 506.

35 Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 88f.; and Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, articles D56, D58, D86, E18.

36 See A. F. P. Hulsewé, " 'Contracts' of the Han period," in *Il diritto in Cina*, ed. L. Lanciotti (Florence, 1978), pp. 11–38.

37 For specimens of surviving maps of before 168 B.C., see Michael Loewe, "Manuscripts found recently in China: A preliminary survey," *TP*, 63:2–3 (1977), 124–25.

THE JUDICIAL PROCESS

The mechanics of the judicial process are fairly well known.[38] Suspects and criminals were arrested by the county police or the posthouse chiefs – often retired military men – who were subordinate to the county chief of police. Arrests were often the result of careful detective work, including the reading of footprints.[39] Suspects were incarcerated and eventually interrogated, the indispensable confession being obtained by means of torture; this was usually by the bastinado, applied to the buttocks and thighs. Judges were, however, warned to make sparing use of such beatings.[40] Long discussions were held at the imperial court to decide the number of strokes that could legitimately be applied during the course of one hearing, and the codes contained detailed prescriptions for the size and weight of the stick.[41] Suspects were often interrogated with the help of a list of queries prepared beforehand. Evidence in the form of written documents was used, as well as the confrontation of witnesses; the latter were frequently likewise incarcerated, along with the family members of the accused.[42]

When the required confession had been obtained, the culprit was sentenced to a punishment that was originally felt to counterbalance the evil act (see above, p. 522), but no instances are known of making the punishment fit the crime – as, for example, cutting off the hand of a thief. In cases where the search for the correct "category of punishment" proved too difficult for the local administrator, the case was referred to higher authority for the final verdict, sometimes even to the superintendent of trials.

It seems that the local magistrates were fully authorized to apply the full scale of punishments, including the death penalty; it is only in later centuries that in specified capital cases the central government's permission had to be explicitly asked before the death penalty could be carried out.

There is one general exception to the process described above. To take action against the members of one social group, permission had to be obtained from the throne. This group originally included the upper ranks of the nobility and the higher echelons of the administration, but in the

38 For a description of these processes and an account of the technical terms that were used, see Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 72f. For a documentary account of a case that may be variously classified as civil or criminal, see A. F. P. Hulsewé, "A lawsuit of A.D. 28," in *Studia sino-mongolica, Festschrift für Herbert Franke*, ed. W. Bauer (Wiesbaden, 1979), pp. 1–22.

39 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 264, 267, 270 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, E20–E22).

40 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 245–46 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, E1–E2).

41 For example, see *HS* 23, p. 1100 (Hulsewé, *Remnants*, p. 337).

42 See Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 72–80.

long run – and long after the period under survey – it came to cover practically the whole gentry.[43]

However, no privilege prevailed in case of the so-called heinous crimes. These were in the beginning acts directed against the ruler, his palaces, or his tomb, as well as against the safety of the state or the sanctity of religious buildings. Such crimes, depending on their gravity, were called *ta-ni wu-tao* (greatly refractory and against the *tao*, usually rendered by the term "impiety"), or *pu-ching* (disrespect, the Latin *nefas;* they sometimes included incest, "behavior as of birds and beasts"). Persons guilty of such crimes were invariably put to death, often under horrible tortures; their close relatives were beheaded, and other relatives and dependents were enslaved or banished.[44]

Special regulations existed for young children and old people beyond a certain age. When imprisoned, they were to be treated leniently. They were not to be fettered, and the punishment for their act as stipulated by law could be decreased; they were even not to be prosecuted as long as their crime had not been heinous. Special provisions also existed for women. When condemned to hard labor, the type of work they had to do differed from that prescribed for men. Women were also allowed to hire a substitute to perform the labor to which they had been condemned in cases where their punishment was to be only for the period of a few months.[45]

FORMS OF PUNISHMENT

Early traditional China knew three types of punishment: the death penalty, the mutilating punishments, and hard labor.[46] Imprisonment as a punishment was unknown; prisons served to lodge suspects and convicts during the hearings, and pending the execution of the verdict.

The death penalty normally consisted of beheading, called "casting away in the marketplace"; this could be rendered more shameful by the exposure of the corpse or by mounting the head on a pole. Then there was "the cutting in two at the waist," executed by means of a blade hinged on a block. And finally there was "the application of the five punishments," whereby the victim was horribly mutilated before being killed. This cruel punishment was often applied to persons who had committed one of the heinous crimes. Around the sixth century of our era, strangling came to be

43 For the concept of the privileged groups and instances of special treatment, see Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 285f.; see also p. 523 above.

44 Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 156–204.

45 See Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 298–302.

46 For details of these punishments, see Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 102f.

added to the death penalties, whereas "cutting in two at the waist," although maintained in the text of the codes, was no longer applied.

The mutilating punishments originally consisted of tattooing the face, cutting off the nose, and amputation of one or both feet, but these mutilations tended to disappear. Already by 167 B.C. they had been formally abolished and replaced by a varying number of strokes of the bastinado, and even these were gradually decreased.[47] The names of these punishments continued in use, whereas their form was completely changed. Another mutilating punishment that was occasionally used was castration, sometimes in commutation of the death penalty.

The punishment most frequently inflicted was hard labor, for a varying number of years,[48] and this was normally preceded by the bastinado. Here also, archaic terms were used which no longer referred to actual practice, such as "spirit firewood," explained as "cutting firewood to be used in the sacrifices to the spirits," or "wall dawn," which supposedly meant that the convict had to build defense walls and stand guard from early dawn.[49] In actual fact, convicts were condemned to hard labor for periods varying from one to five years; the latter could be aggravated by shaving the head and the beard, and sometimes by the application of leg irons and an iron collar, whence there arose the colloquial expression "collar man" (*ch'ien-tzu*).

In general, hard labor convicts worked on public works inside China proper, building roads and embankments and digging canals, and also occasionally preparing imperial tombs; they were rarely sent to the borders, although there are instances when the government dispatched amnestied capital offenders to join the frontier defense forces.[50] Sometimes hard labor convicts were employed, together with government slaves, in the state foundries and mining offices.

Women could likewise be condemned to hard labor, but their tasks were different; originally they seem to have been made to hull and sift grain, and the Ch'in rule, describing in detail the quantities of refined grain obtained by pounding, may well have been applicable to them.[51] Later developments are unknown.

Amnesties were sometimes proclaimed. No details are known for Ch'in,

47 *HS* 4, p. 125 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 255); *HS* 23, p. 1097 (Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 333f.).

48 A number of Chinese and Japanese scholars believe that before 167 B.C. all hard labor punishments were for life; see Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law* (Introduction) pp. 16–17 and note 8.

49 The true meaning of the word *tan*, (lit. "dawn"), as seen in the expression *ch'eng-tan* (wall dawn), remains unknown.

50 These were men who had benefitted from an imperial amnesty that provided for convicts to complete their sentences by service rendered under specified conditions; see Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 131, 147 note 9, 240–42; Michael Loewe, *Records of Han administration* (Cambridge, 1967), Vol. I, p. 79.

51 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 44–45 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A29–A30).

but in Han this was usually done on the occasion of happy events, such as enthronements. Amnesties either extended to all condemned persons, often including even capital cases, or they were restricted to certain groups or even to certain areas. For capital cases, punishment was commuted to "the death penalty decreased by one degree," the heaviest form of hard labor. Others were "freed from their prisoner status," but were still obliged to finish their term by working for the government; however, they were no longer chained and made to wear "russet clothes."[52]

Redemption of punishment was common practice during both the Ch'in and the Han periods; the technical term, *shu*, is also used for slaves buying their freedom.[53] Redemption must have been frequently allowed, in view of the number of times it is mentioned in the Ch'in laws, which permit it for banishment,[54] hard labor,[55] mutilation and tattooing,[56] castration,[57] and even the death penalty.[58] For the Han period, the documentation is not so clear.[59]

It is noteworthy that persons could be sentenced to redemption, a measure which was therefore equivalent to a heavy fine; the amounts of these fines are unknown. The punishment was not even executed in cases where the condemned person was unable to pay the redemption fee, because then he was made to repay his obligation by working for the government with hard labor convicts at the rate of eight cash per day (six cash if he was fed by the government).[60] Under Han this last provision may have lapsed; the historian Ssu-ma Ch'ien was castrated because he did not have the means to redeem this punishment.[61] It is likewise for the Han period that there are examples of high-placed individuals who redeemed their punishment by means of a payment in kind, such as horses or thousands of bamboo staves.[62]

A more general means of redeeming punishment consisted in relinquishing an order or orders of aristocratic rank. Not only did the emperor on

52 For the Han period, see Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 225–50; Brian E. McKnight, *The quality of mercy: Amnesties and traditional Chinese justice* (Honolulu, 1981). For a list of the general amnesties proclaimed between 205 B.C. and A.D. 196, see Loewe, "Aristocratic ranks," pp. 165–71.

53 Hulsewé, *Remnants*, p. 208; Wilbur, *Slavery in China*, p. 419 note 102.

54 *Shui-hu-ti*, p. 91 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A72).

55 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 84–85, 143, 178, 179, 200, 231, (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A68, C20, D52, D94, D136, D164).

56 *Shui-hi-ti*, pp. 84–85, 152, 164, 231 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A68, D3, D25, D164).

57 *Shui-hu-ti*, p. 200 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, D94).

58 *Shui-hu-ti* pp. 84f. (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A68).

59 Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 205–14.

60 *Shui-hu-ti*, p. 84 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A68).

61 Hulsewé, *Remnants*, p. 207; Édouard Chavannes, *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-Ma Ts'ien* [Paris, 1895–1905; rpt. Paris, 1969], Vol. I, p. ccxxxii.

62 Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 210f., nos. 9, 11, 17.

joyful occasions grant one or two degrees of rank to the male population, but such ranks were even sold in order to refill the treasury, with the express inducement that they could be used to redeem punishment.[63] Unfortunately, the source material provides only instances where the holders of the two highest ranks of the full range of twenty were permitted to return their ranks in order to escape punishment.[64] In later times the system of twenty ranks fell into disuse, but the custom of redemption continued to exist for members of the civil service, officials being permitted in those cases expressly mentioned in the codes (e.g., the T'ang code) "to use their office in order to redeem their punishment." In all cases the persons involved fell back to the rank and file of untitled subjects.

Redemption is not to be confused with the fine. As far as the material allows us to observe, fines under the Ch'in were of two types. In the first place, fines were imposed on officials for misdemeanors in the official sphere. The amounts of such fines were not expressed in money; they consisted of arms: one or two suits of armor, one or two shields, or several tens of sets of laces used to string scale armor together. In the second place, commoners could be "fined" with shorter or longer periods of corvée labor or military service. During the Han period this situation continued, but both the name and the amount were changed: "fine" was no longer *tzu* but *fa*, and instead of armor, other items, ounces of gold had to be paid.[65]

Banishment appears to have been a normal punishment under Ch'in, when exiles were sent to the newly conquered region of Shu in the west.[66] In Han times, however, it was used far less. Deposed kings were punished by forced residence in the interior provinces, whereas persons whose death penalty had been commuted and relatives of persons executed for heinous crimes were banished to the frontiers, either to the northwest (Tun-huang), or to the deep south (present-day Kwangtung province or northern Vietnam).[67] It is to be noted that, in contrast to the practice in ancient Greece, but similar to that in tsarist Russia, Chinese exiles were escorted to their destination inside the empire; they were handed over to the local authorities there and remained subject to official control.[68] So far, no

63 See Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 214–16. For the sale of these orders, see Loewe, "Aristocratic ranks," pp. 126f. 64 See Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 218–22.

65 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 133f. 154; Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, Introduction, and articles C8 and D6; as well as A. F. P. Hulsewé, "Weights and measures in Ch'in law," in *State and law in East Asia: Festschrift Karl Bünger*, ed. Dieter Eikemeier and Herbert Franke (Wiesbaden, 1981), pp. 36f. For fines in gold, see Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 134f.

66 See Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, Introduction; and *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 91, 92, 131, 143, 150, 177, 178, 204, 261, 276 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A72, A90, C5, C7, C20, D1, D48–50, D102, D103, E17, E24).

67 See Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 132f.; and Ōba Osamu, *Shin Kan hōseishi no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1982), pp. 165–98. 68 See *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 261f. (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, E17).

information has become available concerning the further fate of these exiles; we do not know whether they were made to work or held in prison.

ADMINISTRATIVE RULES

Since early times there must have existed a large body of administrative rules, but except for those included in the documents discovered in 1975, not many have come down to us. Nevertheless, their existence and even their purport can be deduced from a multitude of isolated remarks in historical texts and inscriptions.

In the first place, there must have been rules for the administrative division of the empire into commanderies and kingdoms, which were subdivided into counties; all these areas were governed by imperially appointed officials. With the expansion of the empire, new commanderies were continually being organized and new counties were being created to accompany the growth of the taxable population in the newly opened areas. These units were abolished or amalgamated when expansion suffered a setback or the inhabitants decreased in number due to natural disasters or migration. Below the county level were the villages, combined in different units for purposes of taxation and for corvée labor. At a higher level, the commanderies were grouped together in large regions, constituting the areas regularly visited by the regional inspectors with their staff;[69] these areas were transformed into provinces toward the end of Later Han.

In the second place, there was the whole imperial administration with all its rules and regulations: the organization of the central government with its manifold ministries, directorates, and services, as well as that of the provincial administration; the rules for the appointment, promotion, and dismissal of personnel from the chancellor down to the lowest clerk. There were also the regulations concerning taxation and obligations for corvée labor. In short, there was a multiplicity of laws and ordinances which ensured the functioning of the complex government of a large empire.

Although the text of most of these regulations is irretrievably lost, it has proved possible to reconstruct at least in outline some of these rules, such as those for the system of taxation or those for the functioning of the civil service.

As regards taxation and corvée labor,[70] we know that down to the reforms of the T'ang dynasty (618–907), in principle all adults paid a poll tax in cash or in kind (usually certain lengths of silk or hemp cloth),

69 For the administrative organization of the empire, see Chapter 2 above, pp. 123f., 156f.; Chapter 7, pp. 470f., and Chapter 8, pp. 506f.

70 For details of the system of taxation, see Chapter 10 below, pp. 595f.

depending on the period. Merchants were assessed at a higher rate, while the owners of slaves had to pay twice the normal amount for each slave. Again, depending on the period, women, and sometimes younger male members of the household, paid less, as did children. Besides this personal tax, which during the Han period was established at a theoretical 120 cash, there was the land tax, fixed at one-fifteenth of the harvest at the beginning of the Han dynasty, around 200 B.C., to be reduced to one-thirtieth a few decades later and remaining unchanged for several centuries. Besides these major taxes there existed a sales tax, and in times of financial stress, a capital levy.

The land tax was paid in kind, being part of the harvest; the poll tax was paid in cash during the Former Han period, but since at least the middle of the first century A.D. this tax came increasingly to be paid in kind. This was usually in lengths of hempen tissue, but it was sometimes paid in silk or in quantities of silk floss.

It is to be noted that the growing number of tenants of the landed gentry paid neither poll tax nor land tax to the government, but a land rent to their landlords.[71] Land rents were always quite high, averaging half or two-thirds of the harvest, even on government-held land during periods of strong central power.

In principle, all males of a certain age, which varied in the course of the centuries between fifteen and twenty-three years, down to a theoretical limit at fifty-six or sixty, had to perform corvée labor in their home county during a fixed period. This labor was mostly used in public works that often included the maintenance of government buildings, such as offices or storehouses, and sometimes building roads and canals or repairing dikes.[72] In case of flood, the corvée laborers were called up to fill the breach, sometimes being kept longer than the statutory period until the dike was repaired. As the statutes permitted the hiring of a substitute, it is evident that the system required the conscription of only a certain portion of the available manpower.[73]

The Ch'in documents show that, on the local level, men who failed to report when called up, or who ran away from the site of their work, were punished by the bastinado; they were more heavily punished in cases when they had taken government tools with them.[74] Officials were punished if

71 For conditions of landownership, see Chapter 10 below, pp. 556f.

72 For the use of corvée laborers in work following the breaches of the Yellow River's banks, in 132 B.C., see *HS* 6, p. 163 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 40); *HS* 29, p. 1679; and *Shih-chi* 29, p. 1410 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. III, p. 527).

73 For the possibility of paying substitutes to render conscript service, see Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, pp. 162f.

74 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 207, 220, 221, 278 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, D109, D143, D144, E6).

they did not register young men of service age, when they kept back such men by appointing them as "retainers," when they did not muster the conscripts, or when they called up more than one person from the same household at the same time.[75]

Another duty which was likewise imposed on all males was that of military service, but it seems that in this case also only a fraction of those who were available were drafted. Those drafted served the first year in their home commanderies and then a second year either in the armies garrisoned around the capital or on the frontier; conscripts of kingdoms performed their whole service within its borders.[76]

This system was in force for the first two centuries of the dynasty's existence, but under the Later Han military conscription fell into disuse. It was revived again temporarily under the following dynasties. During these later periods the armies consisted mostly of volunteers and of hired foreign tribesmen. But regardless of whether the troops were foreign or native, a multitude of rules and regulations applied to the army, although only a few items are mentioned in our sources.

It is among the archeological material that many rules have been found, as well as numerous examples of their application in practice.[77] These finds demonstrate the demand for exact bookkeeping, including the maintenance of lists of stores and equipment, and for annual and semi-annual reports. They include unexpected rules such as those for annual archery tests, awarding merit for good results,[78] certificates of blameless conduct needed for obtaining a passport,[79] documents granting leave of absence to persons to go and bury their parents,[80] and tax returns, as well as circulars demanding the arrest of counterfeiters and fugitives from justice.[81] In short, they show, albeit in fragmentary form, the working of a bureaucratic machinery governed by a host of rules and regulations.

Whereas the Han material from Tun-huang and Chü-yen bears witness

75 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 131, 143, 147, 222 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, C5, C20, C25, D175).

76 For conditions of service, see Hulsewé, *Remnants*, p. 17.

77 These finds consist principally of the fragments of manuscripts discovered at various sites in the northwest of China, near Tun-huang and Chü-yen; for these texts see, e.g., Édouard Chavannes, *Les documents chinois découverts par Aurel Stein dans les sables du Turkestan Oriental* (Oxford, 1913); Henri Maspero, *Les documents chinois de la troisième expédition de Sir Aurel Stein en Asie Centrale* (London, 1953); and Loewe, *Records*; as well as Lao Kan, *Chü-yen Han chien k'ao-shih* (Taipei, 1960); and the Peking publication, *Chü-yen Han chien chia, i pien*, ed. Chung-kuo she-hui k'o-hsüeh-yüan, K'ao-ku yen-chiu-so (Peking, 1980). More recent discoveries in the Chü-yen area, which await publication, include a number of complete sets of documents. To these should be added the Ch'in documents discovered in Hupei and published in *Shui-hu-ti*; the legal texts among the latter have been translated in Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*.

78 Loewe, *Records*, p. 118. 79 Loewe, *Records*, p. 110.

80 Loewe, *Records*, p. 83; Hulsewé, "Ch'in documents," pp. 107f.

81 Hulsewé, *Remnants*, p. 73; Hulsewé, "Royal rebels," p. 318.

to the practical application of these rules, it is the Ch'in documents which contain a few hundred examples of the regulations themselves, and it may confidently be assumed that they remained in force during the Han period.[82] Because these regulations belonged to a subordinate local official, they provide a wealth of details concerning the lowest level of the administration, but they leave other important domains untouched. The material on penal law, for instance, is mainly concentrated on theft, receiving stolen goods,[83] and fighting by means of a great variety of objects, from sewing needles to spears,[84] but it hardly mentions manslaughter or murder. Still, several articles deal with infanticide and maiming or killing one's children or slaves without official permission.[85]

In the administrative sphere, with its endless paperwork,[86] particular attention is paid to the handling of official documents: The time of their dispatch and arrival had to be carefully noted, and letters expected but not received had to be traced; all documents had to be forwarded immediately and delays were punished.[87] Other rules establish the time for the appointment and dismissal of subordinate personnel appointed locally. They order punishment for the responsible officials in case such nominees proved to be unfit for their duties.[88] Especially to be avoided was the appointment of men who had formerly been permanently dismissed.[89]

Many of the Ch'in rules concern grain, its storage and distribution as rations, and the control of the stock. Regular reports were required on the state of the crops.[90] Detailed rules existed for stacking the incoming grain,[91] for registering this, and for keeping accounts of the stock,[92] for checks against wastage and theft,[93] and for punishment of malversations.[94] There existed a separate statute of checking, which ordered when and how controls should be made.[95] For this purpose there existed rules regarding

82 Hulsewé, *Remnants*, pp. 26f. and 333.

83 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 150–73 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, D1–D40).

84 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 185–90 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, D64–D76).

85 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 182f. (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, D56–59, D62).

86 See A. F. P. Hulsewé, "Han time documents," *TP*, 45 (1957), 19.

87 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 103–04 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A95–A96).

88 In the Han period, officials were punished for having recommended unsuitable men for imperial appointment; see e.g., Hulsewé, *Remnants*, p. 193 note 5 and p. 278.

89 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 127f., 130 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, C1, C4). For the term *fei* (to be permanently dismissed), see Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A90, note 5.

90 *Shui-hu-ti*, p. 24 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A1).

91 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 35f., 98 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A19, A86).

92 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 35, 38–39 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A19–A21).

93 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 96–98, 113–16, 215–16 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A82–A84, B1–B6, D127–D130).

94 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 99–100, 113, 115–16 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A86–A87, B1, B5–B6, D131–D132).

95 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 96–101, 112–126 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A82–A89, B1–B29).

weights and measures, which all storehouses had to possess[96] and which were tested annually;[97] their loss resulted in punishment.[98] If weights or measures showed deviations from the norm, the personnel concerned were punished.[99]

Other rules laid down the exact quantity of seed for a specified area – the *mou* of about 450 square meters or about one-tenth of an acre – for different kinds of cereals and for peas and beans,[100] probably because seed grain was loaned to farmers, as was the custom in Han times.[101] Also the quantities of several types of refined grain, obtained by repeated pounding of a fixed measure of unhusked material, were laid down, probably serving as a standard for women condemned to hard labor.[102] The pounded grain was issued, for example, to hard labor convicts, with detailed rules for the quantities of the rations for men, women, and children, depending on the type of work.[103] For the Han period we possess a wealth of information concerning the rations issued to the men stationed on the northwestern frontier, in the Tun-huang and Chü-yen areas; these documents show the practical application of regulations which were evidently quite similar to the Ch'in rules.[104]

Besides grain, horses and cattle also formed the subject of Ch'in laws; these animals were to be regularly inspected, and lack of care as well as wounding them was punished.[105]

Painstaking studies by Chinese scholars, such as Lao Kan and Yen Keng-wang, and Japanese historians, like Katō Shigeshi, Moriya Mitsuo, Hamaguchi Shigekuni, Kamada Shigeo, Ōba Osamu, and Miyazaki Ichisada to mention only a few, have reconstructed the organization of the civil service. Whereas the relevant texts – the chapters on the administration of the empire in the dynastic histories – provide many details about the organization of the departments and offices of the central government, they say little about their actual working, and hardly anything about the provincial administration.

In addition, careful research has brought to light the regulations governing the training and appointment of the civil servants, and the qualifications that were required. There is also information regarding their normal

96 *Shui-hu-ti*, p. 108 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A104).
97 *Shui-hu-ti*, p. 70 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A54).
98 *Shui-hu-ti*, p. 213 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, D124).
99 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 113f. (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, B3, B4). See also Hulsewé, "Weights and measures."
100 *Shui-hu-ti*, p. 43 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A27).
101 See *HS* 4, p. 117 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 242–43); *HS* 9, p. 279 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 302–03). 102 See above, p. 533 note 51.
103 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 49, 51 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A12, A15).
104 See Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, pp. 93f.
105 *Shui-hu-ti*, pp. 33, 81, 132, 141–42 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, A9, A74, C6, C17–C18).

careers, and their stipends; such norms must have been based on statutes and ordinances which are no longer extant.[106] Rather unexpectedly, there is a plethora of information on a point of secondary importance – namely, leave of absence – for which we possess fragments of no less than one Ch'in and two Han statutes, as well as of three Han ordinances, two precedents, and one ruling.

The Han period saw the birth of several systems which were to continue throughout the imperial period: the entry into the civil service through recommendation, through examinations, and by title of birth.[107] Originally, financial status seems to have been the sole requirement, possibly in order to protect incumbents from the dangers of bribery and corruption, but from about 130 B.C. the commanderies were required to recommend two men for service annually. They were to be "filial and incorruptible"; they would serve first in the offices of the central government, and would later be commissioned as county officials.[108] But besides possessing these moral qualifications, the men had also to be well versed in office work, which they had learned in the lower ranks of the administration of the commanderies; eventually these recommended men came to be tested by having to answer questions concerning problems of the day. Finally, certain highly placed officials had the right to have their descendants appointed to a post in the government service. This practice continued to exist in spite of being repeatedly abolished.

Another road to office, whose exact details escape us, was by way of the Academy (T'ai-hsüeh). This had been established in 124 B.C. with a specified number of academicians (*po-shih*) and fifty pupils. But two hundred years later the number of disciples had risen to several thousands.[109] It is noteworthy that these pupils were not necessarily young men; in order to prevent nepotism, the age of the "filial and incorruptible" was eventually raised to at least forty years, a sign of the desperate attempts of the central government to curb the powers of the local magnates.

PRIVATE LAW

If we are but poorly informed in the field of public law and if we have to content ourselves with the generalities outlined above, our knowledge of

106 E.g., see A. F. P. Hulsewé, "The Shuo-wen dictionary as a source for ancient Chinese law," in *Studia Serica Bernhard Karlgren dedicata*, ed. Søren Egerod and Else Glahn (Copenhagen, 1959), pp. 239–58.

107 See Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 132f.; Rafe de Crespigny, "The recruitment system of the imperial bureaucracy of the late Han," *Chung-chi journal*, 6:1 (1966), 67–78.

108 *HS* 6, pp. 160, 164 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 34, 42); *HS* 56, pp. 2512–13.

109. *HS* 6, pp. 171–72 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 54); Dubs, *HFHD*, p. 24; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 138f.

private law is even less satisfactory. The reason for this paucity of information is to be found not only in the meagerness of our texts, but also, and chiefly, because private law was mainly left to local custom and usage and appeared in writing only when its infringement constituted a punishable offense. It is due to the labors of Chinese and Japanese scholars that we possess some knowledge of a few isolated features concerning, for example, marriage, succession and inheritance, deeds of sale, and slavery following debt.[110]

The early ritual handbooks depict a clan system in which the eldest member of the senior branch possessed considerable power. This system continued to prevail in imperial times, but it had to contend with the rules bequeathed by the Legalist Ch'in government (221–210 B.C.) that had been taken over unchanged by the early Han rulers. As a result, for example, adult married sons were compelled to have a household separate from that of their father, in contrast with the Confucian ideal of having all generations living under the same roof.

Marriage was monogamous insofar as a man could have only one official wife; in theory, however, he could have an unlimited number of concubines. Marriages between slaves were recognized in law, although we know nothing about the way in which slaves found, or were given, partners.[111] We hear about marriage presents, such as dowries, but for this early period nothing is known about their disposal in case of divorce. We do happen to know that the dowry of a criminal wife was ceded to her husband.[112]

Ch'ü T'ung-tsu has shown that the Confucianization of Chinese law was a slow process and that the amalgamation of the Confucian views of society with the law codes was completed only in the T'ang code of A.D. 653.[113] The Confucian ethic demanded, for instance, a mourning period of three years for one's parents, but throughout practically the whole of Han the leave of absence granted to government officials on such occasions was a mere thirty-six days.

The Confucian rules for marriage insisted not only on a very strict clan exogamy, resulting in the prohibition of taking a woman of the same surname as wife or concubine, but also excluded a considerable number of blood relations as possible marriage partners. In Han times, however, these

110 E.g., see Yang Shu-ta, *Han-tai hun-sang li-su k'ao* (Shanghai, 1933); Liu Tseng-kuei, *Han-tai hun-yin chih-tu* (Taipei, 1980); Makino Tatsumi, "Saikan no hōken sōzoku hō," *Tōhō gakuhō, (Tokyo)* 3 (1932), 255–329; and Niida Noboru, *Chūgoku hōseishi kenkyū: Tochihō, torihikihō* (Tokyo, 1960), pp. 400f. 111 See Wilbur, *Slavery in China*, pp. 158f.

112 *Shui-hu-ti*, p. 224 (Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in law*, D150).

113 See Ch'ü, *Law and society in traditional China*, pp. 267f.; Derk Bodde and Clarence Morris, *Law in imperial China: Exemplified by 190 Ch'ing dynasty cases* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), Part I, Chapter 1; and Hulsewé, *Remnants*, p. 297.

rules were applied far less strictly, at least among the higher strata of society (the only group about which we are somewhat well informed).[114] In later times, the initiative for divorce could be taken only by the husband, but for the Han period there are several attested instances of women taking the decision to separate.

For the marquisates (or nobilities) of the Han period, only a son born from the chief wife was allowed to succeed to his father's title and estate; if no such son existed, and in spite of the existence of sons of concubines, the incumbent was said to have "died without posterity" and the fief reverted to the state.[115] In the other strata of society, no difference is known to have been made between the sons of wives and concubines; they seem to have been entitled to equal shares in the inheritance. Testamentary disposal of property seems to have been unknown.

Commerce was actively pursued, in spite of the opposition to trade in the prevalent philosophies, as is fully apparent from the texts. Thus, the *Shih-chi* and *Han shu* enumerate different types of business which could lead to the accumulation of great riches. Merchants traded all over China and even with the people outside its borders at officially controlled markets, but little is known about overseas trade and nothing at all about maritime law.[116] The only certain evidence left is archeological, consisting of deeds of sale of land, and a few deeds for the sale of clothing; these latter concern expensive gowns traded between men serving on the distant northwestern frontier.[117] The contracts contain a description of the goods transferred, the amount paid, the names of buyer and seller, the date of transfer and the signatures of witnesses.

In the case of sales of land, the location is given in relation to the neighboring properties. Often there is mention of the price of the wine

114 See Yang, *Han-tai hun-sang li-su k'ao*, pp. 42–43.

115 For the hereditary nature of the marquisates, see Makino, "Saikan no hōken sōzoku hō;" and Loewe, "Aristocratic ranks," pp. 109, 143, 151f.

116 For the comparative value of different types of trade, see *SC* 129, pp. 3253f. (Nancy Lee Swann, *Food and money in ancient China* [Princeton, 1950], pp. 420f.); *HS* 91. pp. 3686f. (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 431f.). For the conduct of trade at the frontiers, see Ying-shih Yü, *Trade and expansion in Han China: A study in the structure of Sino-barbarian economic relations* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), pp. 92f.

117 Deeds of sale for land to be used as a burial site, originally written on wood or bamboo strips, were copied on strips of lead, etc., or on bricks, which were placed inside the tomb chamber; deeds for the sale of clothing are original documents, written on wood. For such deeds, see Hulsewé, "Contracts" (where also the frequent forgeries are discussed); and Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, p. 116, for the sale of clothing. See also Ho-pei sheng wen-hua-chü wen-wu kung-tso-tui, *Wang-tu erh hao Han mu* (Peking, 1959), p. 13 and Plate 16, for a text used to exorcise evil influences from the tomb with some elements of a contract. See further Ch'eng Hsin-jen, "Wu-han ch'u-t'u ti liang k'uai Tung Wu ch'ien ch'üan shih-wen," *KK*, 1965.10, 529–30; Chiang Hua, "Yang-chou Kan-ch'üan-shan ch'u-t'u Tung-Han Liu Yüan-t'ai mai-ti chuan-ch'üan," *WW*, 1980.6, 57–58; and Wu T'ien-ying, "Han-tai mai-ti ch'üan k'ao," *KKHP*, 1982.1, 15–34.

with which the deal was sealed. The land deeds mostly contain clauses transferring the standing growth and possible treasure trove to the buyer. The buyer is likewise freed from the former owner's inherent right of redemption; this feature is apparently peculiar to the Chinese concept of sale.[118] It has been shown that ownership of land was always relative, never constituting an absolute right *in rem;* in the end, ownership remained vested in the state, which could always claim its rights. Under these conditions, the land tax may be considered as land rent, paid in respect of the usufruct.[119]

The deeds of sale for the gowns seem to be in actual fact certificates of pawning, allowing to the seller the right of redemption. The normal term for pawning, *chih*, was replaced by another, *chui*, when persons were the object of pawn. There are several examples of individuals placing themselves or their children in pawn in order to redeem a debt or to guarantee a loan; this practice could easily lead to permanent enslavement.[120]

As regards the sale of slaves, we possess only a literary parody of a sales contract, which does, however, contain the essential information in exactly the same way as the other contracts; a full date, the names of both seller and buyer, the object of the sale (in this case a slave mentioned by name), and the price.[121]

118 See Hulsewé, "Contracts," pp. 18–27.

119 See Hiranaka Reiji, *Chūgoku kodai no densei to zeibō* (Kyoto, 1967), p. 104; Ho Ch'ang-chün, *Han T'ang chien feng-chien t'u-ti so-yu-chih hsing-shih yen-chiu* (Shanghai, 1964), pp. 48, 53; and A. F. P. Hulsewé, "The influence of the state of Qin on the economy as reflected in the texts discovered in Yunmeng Prefecture," in *The scope of state power in China*, ed., Stuart R. Schram (London and Hong Kong, 1985).

120 See Niida, *Chūgoku hōseishi kenkyū: Tochi-hō, torihiki-hō*, pp. 477–89.

121 See Clarence Martin Wilbur, *Slavery in China*, pp. 382–92; and Utsunomiya, *Kandai shakai keizaishi kenkyū*, pp. 256–374.

CHAPTER 10

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY OF FORMER HAN

This chapter discusses social and economic conditions in China under the Han dynasty (202 B.C.–220 A.D.), when the unified, centralized state that had been achieved by the short-lived Ch'in empire was consolidated into a permanent form which lasted – allowing only for the short break caused by the Hsin dynasty of Wang Mang – for some four centuries.

It was once the common assumption that during the Ch'in and the Han dynasties the social structure and economic conditions, which had undergone the most remarkable and rapid transformations during the Spring and Autumn (722–481 B.C.) and Warring States (403–221 B.C.) periods, settled into set and unchanging forms which persisted through the succeeding two thousand years until the beginnings of the modern period. There is no question that the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods were marked by radical social and economic changes which prepared the stage for the centralized states of Ch'in and Han. But recent studies have proved that gradual changes in the structure of society, and a gradual but nonetheless distinct development of the Chinese economy, continued. Not only did social and economic developments which had begun during the earlier period continue and reach their final form under Han, but entirely new trends and developments can be seen to begin under later dynasties. Of many of the elements which characterize the society and economy of later imperial China, from the T'ang period onward, there was as yet not the slightest sign. The following account has as its primary objective the definition in the most precise possible terms of the place which the Han period holds not in some sterile concept of a stagnant and unchanging society, but in the dynamic and continuous development of China's social and economic institutions.

The social and economic developments of the Spring and Autumn and

This chapter was completed by Professor Nishijima in 1969. The text remains unchanged, but some additional references have been added by the editors to refer readers to more recent secondary literature, especially in Western languages. For a somewhat fuller Japanese version; see Nishijima Sadao, *Chūgoku kodai no shakai to keizai* (Tokyo, 1981). The following work, which appeared while this volume was in the press, should also be consulted: Joseph Needham, *Science and civilisation in China:* Vol. VI, Biology and biological Technology Part II: Francesca Bray, Agriculture (Cambridge: 1984).

Warring States periods which laid the foundation for the Han economy and social organization had taken place on a regional scale in the various independent states of the period, such as Ch'i, Chin, (split into Hann,[1] Wei, and Chao after 403 B.C.), Yen, Ch'in, and Ch'u. But the nature of these changes was such as to encourage unification and the development of a centralized empire. Here I shall briefly summarize those trends which are of prime importance in understanding the nature of the economy and of social institutions in Han times.

Most notable of these changes were two revolutionary innovations in agricultural technique, the introduction of iron implements and the application of animal power to cultivation with the plow, together with the widespread development of flood control and irrigation works. These new developments began during the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. and became widespread during the Warring States period.

Before the Spring and Autumn period, most agricultural implements were made either of stone or of wood, and although oxen were already domesticated and used for transport and as sacrificial victims, they were never employed in cultivation. As a result, cultivation was largely restricted to land which could be worked by a primitive plow employing human labor. It was further restricted by natural environmental conditions to areas with a high water table, such as the foot of a mountain range where there were many natural springs, or to terraces and relatively high ground near rivers where there was underground water but no danger of flooding. Such areas as the loess heights, with their deeply incised river valleys, and the flood plain of the Yellow River, which was constantly threatened with inundation, were never available for cultivation. With these strict limitations on the land available for agriculture, control both of society and of the practice of cultivation tended to be exercised either by powerful clans or by village communities, the individual family unit having little independence.

The introduction of the iron plow and the use of oxen as draft animals made it possible to work a much greater area in a shorter time, and also made much deeper cultivation possible. Even the loess heights, previously left untouched, were now to some extent brought under the plow. Flood-control dikes built by the local rulers[2] in the Yellow River Valley made it

1 The name of this state, though represented by a different character in Chinese, should properly be transcribed into English as "Han." See Chapter 1 above, note 37.

2 That is, the *chu-hou*. These were the *de facto* hereditary occupiers and rulers of large areas of land, over which they exercised final rights of government. The *chu-hou* traced their rights and titles back to a deliberate bestowal of lands and authority from the kings of Chou, and the claim that they were his vassals has led to their description as "feudal lords." Different titles had been used to distinguish their degrees of nobility; *kung* (usually rendered duke), *hou* (marquis), etc., and from early times one or more of these rulers was assuming the higher title of *wang* (king). By the fourth century B.C. a high proportion of Chinese territory was governed in the form of such kingdoms; the empire of Ch'in

possible gradually to bring the vast alluvial flood plain unto cultivation, and irrigation works constructed by the local rulers, which made possible the conversion of whole areas to farmland, rapidly spread over much of northern China.

As a consequence of this rapid and widespread expansion of the area under cultivation, the rigid control of the process of cultivation previously exercised by the clans and village communities tended to break down. The individual family rapidly became the normal unit for agrarian production in lands newly brought under cultivation. These were small nuclear families of parents and their children, comprising on the average about five or six members and under strict patriarchal control. They were organized into communities, usually made up of one hundred families, called hamlets (*li*), or into still larger communities comprising more than one *li*.

Changes also took place in the clans of the feudal lords and of their subordinates known as *ch'ing* and *ta-fu*, who had controlled the peasantry.[3] The activities of these individuals had previously been tightly restricted by the operation of the closely knit clan system, so that the nominal head of a clan was not necessarily very powerful, his freedom of action being limited by the other members of the clan. But after the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., the incessant fragmentation of clans and internal conflicts brought an end to many of the weaker lords and their subordinate noble families. Dependent clan members, who now lost both the protection of their lord and their hereditary position, sought the patronage of the more powerful surviving local rulers and subordinate noble families. These provided them with positions and with subsistence, and established a personal lord and vassal relationship with them. The additional power which the lords gained through the adherence of these newly adopted vassals greatly strengthened their power vis-à-vis their own clans, and as a result the clan organization among the ruling class tended to become weaker and to be replaced by a more powerful patriarchal sovereignty.

The economic basis of the lord and vassal relationship between these patriarchal sovereigns and the subordinate nobility which they had adopted from other clans was intimately connected with the emergence of more independent individual peasant families farming lands newly brought under cultivation. Such lands, for the most part former forests and marshes over which the aristocratic clans had exercised no control, were now opened up by the patriarchal sovereigns using the new techniques for water control

was formed in 221 B.C., when one of them succeeded in conquering all its rivals (for this process, see Chapter 1 above, pp. 40f.).

3 As yet these titles signified social rank and status, and they should be distinguished from the use of the same terms as parts of titles of state officials during the imperial period.

and settled by them with peasant communities (*li*) which they provided with agricultural tools. From this was now derived the economic basis of their power.

With these economic changes came a corresponding change in the nature of government. The patriarchal sovereigns now ruled directly over the peasantry through the agency of their vassals who, in their roles of supervisor and tax collector, were the ancestors of the later Chinese state officials. Control over the peasantry extended through the family unit to the individual with respect to recruitment for military and labor service and individually levied poll tax.

Such far-reaching economic and social changes continued on into the late Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, when many lords were eliminated through internecine warfare or in some cases destroyed by subordinate noble families, leaving only the most powerful as survivors. The embryonic system of centralized, bureaucratic rule was fostered in all the kingdoms of the Warring States period but most remarkably in Ch'in which, guided by Shang Yang, efficiently centralized local administration by setting up commanderies (*chün*) and counties (*hsien*) as its basic administrative divisions. It was largely as a result of its improved organization that Ch'in went on to destroy all the other states and effect unification.[4]

Another notable change during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods was the development of commerce and industry. Before the Spring and Autumn period, these occupations had been in the hands of certain subordinate clans, whose interest was retained on an hereditary basis. Naturally enough, the system changed after the middle of the sixth century with the dissolution of the clans and the development of a bureaucracy. Eventually officials of the state assumed control of these undertakings, and the arrangement was destined to become a characteristic feature of parts of the Chinese economy. Professional workers, convicts, captives, and corvée laborers produced goods in government factories, under official supervision, solely for court or state consumption. Insofar as such production was not promoted on a commercial basis, there was no marked social division between those engaged in agriculture and in manufacturing.

It was impossible, however, for all manufacturing to be carried out by the state, especially in the case of the newly developed iron and salt industries. These were geographically limited to the areas in which their raw materials were found, and where private entrepreneurs made vast fortunes. Somewhat exceptionally, and according to a tradition which cannot

4 See Chapter 1 above, pp. 34f.

be supported by firm evidence, the production of salt was organized as a monopoly of the state of Ch'i (situated in the Shantung peninsula) by Duke Huan and his forward-looking minister Kuan Chung during the course of the seventh century.

In the cities, important largely as centers of administration, the rising demand of the resident lords and bureaucrats for goods and services was a powerful stimulus to commercial activity. Trade within and between cities was further facilitated by the development of bronze coinage of various kinds in the different states. Furthermore, the fact that merchants came to handle salt and iron produced by a few monopolistic manufacturers, some of them merchants themselves, and to supply these commodities direct to the consumer, also gave new incentive to commercial activities.

The efforts made to depress the social and political status of the rising merchant class at this time were in part a reflection of the former tradition whereby commerce had been undertaken by certain clans not entitled or required to participate in military service. They also derived from a desire to preserve the agricultural foundations of the state and to prevent the farmers, the principal sources both of foodstuffs and military manpower, from changing to the strictly nonproductive occupation of merchant. Such antimercantile ideas were shared by thinkers of all types later classified as Confucian or Legalist.

These social and economic changes in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods culminated in the creation of the unified Ch'in empire, whose rule was characterized by a centralized bureaucratic administration with the emperor at its head, and individual control over the peasantry by means of the administrative structures of commanderies and counties (*chün-hsien*).

The antimercantile outlook of the new state is exemplified by its heavy taxation of salt merchants and the forcible removal of eastern iron manufacturers to Szechwan after the Ch'in conquest of the east. Ch'in rule also imposed severe burdens on the peasantry in the form of military and labor services, the latter notably for the construction of the Great Wall and the imperial palaces and tombs. On the death of the First Emperor of Ch'in, widespread peasant revolts broke out and the Ch'in empire came to an end only sixteen years after its foundation.

The succeeding Han empire inherited the results of the social, economic, and administrative changes which had taken place over the preceding centuries. It profited from the experience of Ch'in and achieved a stability which had eluded its predecessor. Thus it created a state which, with one serious interruption, was to last some four hundred years and which fur-

thermore formed a partial prototype for the society and economy of the Chinese dynasties for the next two thousand years. On the other hand, some of the new social and economic elements which characterized the Han period were also to prove at variance with and disruptive of the established order, eventually bringing it to an end. The following sections will attempt to trace this process through an account of Han agriculture, commerce, industry, and finance and their interrelations.

Before proceeding further, mention must be made of the historical sources for the social and economic conditions of the Han period. The major sources are of course the Standard Histories of the period, the *Shih-chi, Han shu,* and *Hou-Han shu*, of which the financial monographs, chapter 30 of the *Shih-chi* ("P'ing-chun shu") and chapter 24 of the *Han shu* ("Shih-huo chih"),[5] give much information on economic and financial matters for the Former Han period. The *Yen-t'ieh lun* (Discourses on salt and iron),[6] compiled by Huan K'uan during the reign of Hsüan-ti (74–48 B.C.), records in great detail the debate on the question whether Wu-ti's (r. 141–87 B.C.) new financial policies, in particular the salt and iron monopolies, should be continued in the reign of his successor, and in addition throws much light on general problems of the period. Two Han works describing agricultural techniques are the *Fan Sheng-chih shu* by Fan Sheng-chih (active in the reign of Ch'eng-ti, 33–7 B.C.) and the *Ssu-min yüeh-ling* by Ts'ui Shih, written at the end of the Later Han period. The originals of both books are lost, but their contents can be conjectured from quotations in later works which are still available to us.[7]

Other useful information is to be found in Wang Pao's mock "Contract for a slave," the "T'ung-yüeh," dated 59 B.C.;[8] chapters of Wang Ch'ung's (A.D. 27–ca. 100) *Lun-heng*,[9] written in the first century A.D.; parts of Wang Fu's (ca. 90–165) *Ch'ien-fu lun*; an essay by Chung-ch'ang T'ung (ca.

5 Translated by Nancy Lee Swann in *Food and money in ancient China* (Princeton, 1950).

6 Partially translated by Esson M. Gale, *Discourses on salt and iron: A debate on state control of commerce and industry in ancient China*; chapters I-XIX *translated from the Chinese of Huan K'uan with introduction and notes* (Leiden, 1931); and by Esson M. Gale, Peter A. Boodberg and T. C. Lin, "Discourses on salt and iron (Yen-t'ieh lun: chaps. xx–xxviii)," *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 65 (1934), 73–110. A selection of the more important parts of the text has also appeared in Georges Walter, *Chine, An-81: Dispute sur le sel et le fer, Yantie lun* (Paris, 1978). For a summary of the arguments see Michael Loewe, *Crisis and conflict in Han China* (London, 1974), Chapter 3.

7 A complete translation of these documents is included in Cho-yun Hsu, *Han agriculture: The formation of early Chinese agrarian economy* (206 *B.C.–A.D.* 220), ed. Jack L. Dull (Seattle and London, 1980), pp. 280–94 and 215–28. See also notes 28 and 32 below.

8 For a detailed discussion of the extremely difficult text of the "T'ung-yüeh," see Utsunomiya Kiyoyoshi, "Dōyaku kenkyū" in his *Kandai shakai keizaishi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1955), pp. 256–374. English translations are given by Clarence Martin Wilbur, *Slavery in China during the Former Han dynasty*, (Chicago, 1943), pp. 383–88; and in Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp. 231–34.

9 For a translation see Alfred Forke, *Lun-heng*: Part I. *Philosophical essays of Wang Ch'ung*, and Part II. *Miscellaneous essays of Wang Ch'ung* (Shanghai and London, 1907, 1911; rpt. New York, 1962).

180–220), entitled *Ch'ang-yen*; Ts'ui Shih's essay *Cheng-lun*;[10] sections of Ying Shao's (d. ca. 204) *Feng-su t'ung;* and Hsün Yüeh's (148–209) *Han chi*, all written at the end of the Later Han period. Further materials shedding light on economic practice are to be found in the realistic problems given in the mathematical textbook *Chiu-chang suan-shu*, compiled at the beginning of the first century B.C. Han bronze and stone inscriptions are collected in the *Li-shih* by Hung Kua of the Sung dynasty.

The ten thousand or so Han period documents written on wooden strips discovered at Chü-yen in 1930 and many similar documents subsequently discovered also contain much relevant information. Other archeological finds in the form of stone reliefs depicting scenes of everyday life, funerary objects, iron tools, coins, pottery, and patterned brocades (found in Mongolia and Central Asia) likewise throw considerable light on social and economic conditions.

All this information, however, provides only a partial picture. Much work has yet to be done in relating the different types of evidence to one another so as to make a more comprehensive study, and many problems still await solution. In particular, there is an imbalance between the very full information available on the Former Han period from the *Shih-chi* and *Han shu* and the comparative dearth of information for the Later Han, resulting from the fact that the Standard History of that period has no special monograph dealing with financial and economic matters.[11] As a result, our information on this latter period is fragmentary and comes to a considerable extent from the polemical writings of second-century authors.

RURAL SOCIETY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL TECHNIQUES

The structure of rural society

It is difficult to make a hard and fast distinction between agricultural and urban communities in the Han period, as towns usually had some peasants living within their walls and peasant villages differed little in outward appearance from the towns. Local administrative divisions in Han were, in descending order of size, the commandery (*chün*), the county (*hsien*), the district (*hsiang*), and the hamlet (*li*). The hamlet, the smallest unit, was a

10 For the surviving parts of the *Ch'ang-yen*, see *HHS* 49, pp. 1646f. For the *Cheng-lun* see *HHS* 52, pp. 1725f. For translations and interpretation of both documents, see Étienne Balazs, "Political philosophy and social crisis at the end of the Han dynasty," in his *Chinese civilization and bureaucracy* (New Haven and London, 1964), pp. 218f., 207f.

11 For an attempt to assemble all the material available for such a monograph, see Su Ch'eng-chien, *Hou-Han Shih-huo-chih ch'ang-pien* (Shanghai, 1947).

walled or fenced area with one or two gateways in which perhaps a hundred families lived; individual families (on average, five or six persons) occupied fenced subdivisions called *chai*. A hamlet might exist in isolation, but more often several hamlets together formed a district (*hsiang*), or even a county (*hsien*).

The Han founder Liu Pang, Kao-ti, was of peasant origins, having been born and brought up in Chung-yang li of Feng-i (Feng-hsiang) in P'ei-hsien. An anecdote about him indicates the relationship between Chung-yang li and Feng-hsiang. When Liu Pang established Ch'ang-an as the Han capital, his father refused to live in the new imperial palace. Wishing to please the old man, the emperor had an exact replica of their home village of Feng-i constructed near Ch'ang-an, calling it Hsin-feng (i.e., New Feng-i). To it were moved his father's friends and acquaintances to keep him company. Even the cattle and poultry of the old Feng-i were brought along and, when freed, went into their new pens without hesitation, so identical was their new environment with the old.[12] To judge from this, Chung-yang li must have been a part of Feng-hsiang rather than an independent hamlet.

The inhabitants of a hamlet in this period need not all have the same family name. This is corroborated by the fact that Lu Wan, the later king of Yen, was born in the same hamlet and on the same day as Liu Pang, their families being on intimate terms. On this occasion all the inhabitants of the hamlet visited the two households to offer congratulations with gifts of meat and wine, and later they were to come to congratulate Liu Pang and Lu Wan on the enduring of their friendship into manhood.[13]

Such community life, based on the hamlet, had its religious center in the altar (*she*) where the local deity was enshrined. In the same way there was an altar for the state community (*kuo-she*), and each county and district also had its own altar. The religious festivals which took place at the hamlet altar (*li-she*), at which meat was distributed to the participants, helped to strengthen the community spirit. It is recorded of Ch'en P'ing, a follower of Liu Pang and later a chancellor (*ch'eng-hsiang*), that in his youth, when he was one of those presiding over the festivals held at the hamlet altar, he was very fair in his distribution of these festival meats.[14]

One means whereby the state controlled the social hierarchy within the hamlet was the rank system, which originated in the Warring States period. This during Han consisted of twenty ranks, the eight lowest of which could be bestowed on all male commoners apart from slaves. On such

12 *Hsi-ching tsa-chi* 2, *SPPY* ed., p. 3a–b. 13 *SC* 93, p. 2637; *HS* 34, pp. 1890–91.
14 *SC* 56, p. 2052; *HS* 40, p. 2039.

occasions as an enthronement, the change of a reign title, or the investiture of an heir apparent or an empress, the emperor would bestow one or two degrees of rank on the entire male population above the age of fifteen years. Some two hundred cases of such bestowals have been recorded for the entire Han period. Those receiving these increments of degrees of rank added them at each bestowal to the ranks they had previously held, so that the older a man was, the higher the rank which he held. On these occasions the men's wives received the meat of an ox and 10 *shih* (200 liters) of wine for every hundred families, together with permission to hold a banquet (during this period it was normally prohibited to hold parties for more than three persons for no good reason). As a hundred families constituted a hamlet, the meat and wine were probably given to the hamlet as a whole and the banquet held at the altar, thus making this a religious occasion.

The order of their new titles determined both the men's seating at the banquet and their social status in the hamlet henceforth. Other privileges pertaining to the ranks included reduction of punishments for those convicted of crimes, or exemptions from some statutory service obligations.[15] The actual privileges are illustrated in several questions included in the mathematical textbook *Chiu-chang suan-shu*. One of the questions is: "There are five men each holding different ranks from the first to the fifth. They hunted five deer. How should they share the venison in proportion to their ranks?"

The operation of the rank system appears to indicate that the hamlet was considered to lack the capacity to form its own social hierarchy and also that the state aimed to control the peasants of the hamlet through establishing a social order within it. This was no doubt to compensate for the fact that the administration of the hamlet was outside the regular bureaucratic machinery. In the commanderies and counties, although only their highest officers were directly appointed by the central government, there was a substantial mechanism for bureaucratic control which extended down to the district (*hsiang*) level. County officials responsible for the administration of the district included the chief of police (*yu-chiao*), in charge of public order, and the overseer (*se-fu*), in charge of taxation; these operated together with the elders (*san-lao*), respected members of the district who were responsible for what might be termed educational matters. Although there was no direct bureaucratic administration of the hamlet as such, it did not have complete autonomy, its social order being controlled by the rank system that is outlined above.

15 See Michael Loewe, "The orders of aristocratic rank of Han China," *TP*, 48:1–3 (1960), 97–174; Nishijima Sadao, *Chūgoku kodai teikoku no keisei to kōzō* (Tokyo, 1961); and Nishijima Sadao, "Characteristics of the unified states of Ch'in and Han," in *Proceedings of the XIIe Congrès International des Sciences Historiques* (*Rapports. II*) (Vienna, 1965), pp. 71–90.

The peasant inhabitants of the hamlet were, in the last analysis, the foundation upon which the Han state rested. The hamlet itself evolved with changes in agriculture in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, and in particular as a result of the state's opening up new land by flood control and irrigation. In some cases, however, and frequently in the state of Ch'in in the Warring States period, hamlets were formed in the wake of military conquests when the villages of the defeated enemy were evacuated and repopulated with the victor's own people. The resulting communities were heterogeneous groupings of immigrants lacking clan solidarity or any internal social order. Consequently there are several examples in the Ch'in period of ranks being bestowed on the inhabitants of such new hamlets in order to establish a state-sponsored social hierarchy there.

There are many examples of the opening up of new land through irrigation and the subsequent formation of new communities. One is the irrigation of the Ch'eng-tu basin (which had been annexed by Ch'in toward the end of the Warring States period) carried out by Li Ping, governor of Shu. Another is the digging of the Cheng Kuo Canal, promoted by the king of Ch'in who later proclaimed himself the First Emperor of Ch'in, and named after its engineer, Cheng Kuo of the state of Hann. This brought about the irrigation of the plain north of the Wei River in Shensi and opened up some 40,000 *ch'ing* (450,000 acres) of land, greatly enriching the Ch'in state.

Han likewise promoted large-scale flood-control and irrigation works. The Ts'ao Canal, constructed south of the Wei River to facilitate water transport to Ch'ang-an, also irrigated around 10,000 *ch'ing* (113,000 acres) of private fields in the vicinity. To the north of the Wei was dug the Lung-shou Canal, which had wells connnected by underground drains to prevent the banks from collapsing. New canals were also constructed parallel to the Cheng Kuo Canal north of Ch'ang-an, and many similar projects were carried out in other regions, in some cases opening up as much as 10,000 *ch'ing* (113,000 acres) of land at one time.

Flood control on the lower Yellow River was first started in the reign of Wen-ti (180–157 B.C.), when its banks were destroyed by floods. A massive project to embank the Yellow River was inaugurated by Wu-ti in 109 B.C. and is said to have been directed by the monarch in person. This, however, was not enough to avert many subsequent floods, each of which necessitated difficult reclamation work. None of the projects undertaken in Former Han were sufficient to counter the main danger, which was the threat of a major change of course of the Yellow River. The catastrophic results of such a change, which occurred in A.D. 11 with massive consequent flooding, had a profound effect on the dynasty's history, as has been observed above (Chapter 3, p. 241).

Peasant communities and cultivation in the newly opened areas depended for their continuance upon the maintenance by the state of the irrigation and flood control systems which had brought them into existence. Being thus dependent on state policy, the hamlets in these areas inevitably lacked autonomy. Taxation and labor service were thus not exacted solely to support the ruling class in luxury. By financing flood control and irrigation and maintaining the bureaucracy which implemented them, they benefitted the taxpayer, (that is, the peasant), to a considerable degree and provided many with a source of livelihood. Accordingly, when state power waned and its control over the peasantry declined, the latter were often driven either to abandon their fields or to seek the protection of powerful local families who could perform the functions previously undertaken by the state. This phenomenon was already apparent in the middle of the Former Han period and greatly increased in the Later Han period.

Not all hamlets in the Han period, however, were new communities lacking an autonomous social order. There remained many longer established hamlets which had no need of state irrigation and flood control and in which there was strong familial solidarity. State authority was therefore not easily exerted over these communities. Even in the newly founded hamlets, an independent social order gradually developed, and sometimes powerful families who rejected direct state control and exerted strong influence over the local peasants arose.

At the time of the founding of the Han dynasty, important clans of the Warring States kingdoms still survived. It was necessary, in the interest of unity, for the central government to control them. One policy employed was wholesale resettlement, to break the regional ties of such families and clans. At the suggestion of Liu Ching, Kao-ti had over 100,000 members of powerful families moved to the vicinity of Ch'ang-an. These included the former royal families of the states of Ch'i, Ch'u, Yen, Chao, Hann, and Wei. Afterward, successive emperors down to the reign of Hsüan-ti (74–49 B.C.) when constructing their tombs moved provincial officials of a rank entitling them to a stipend of 2000 *shih* (40,000 liters) of grain or more, and rich families with property worth more than one million coins (*ch'ien*), to new villages in the vicinity of their tombs.

More drastic measures sometimes extended to the murder of the leaders of powerful families and their kin through the agency of local government officials. The "Biographies of harsh officials" in the *Shih-chi* (Ch. 122) and *Han shu* (Ch. 90) record many instances of such suppression. Under such circumstances, many powerful local families preferred to compromise with the government in order to retain some degree of power. The government, in turn, conciliated them by treating them as intermediaries in extending

its own influence in these regions. Thus, younger members of these powerful families frequently took low-ranking posts in local administration, the incumbents of which were recruited from the people of the district and not appointed by the central government. Such positions were a useful means of maintaining the local power of the great landowning families.

The legal implications of land ownership during Han times cannot be determined precisely, owing to the use of a variety of terms and the absence of clear definitions. Although Wang Mang tried in A.D. 9 to establish the general principle that all land belonged *de jure* to the emperor, it is not known whether this was a new departure or the assertion of a traditional claim. In practice, landowners great or small possessed actual rights of ownership over land that had been acquired by purchase, gift, hereditary bequest, or imperial gift. Such land fell into the category of "private land" (*ssu-t'ien*). This was distinguished from "state-owned land" (*kung-t'ien*), which consisted partly of land newly opened through irrigation and partly, especially in the reign of Wu-ti (141–87 B.C.), of land confiscated from private owners who had attempted to evade property tax on it. State lands were on occasion worked directly by the state with slave and corvée labor, but were more often let to peasants whose rents (*chia*) formed part of the state revenues. Military farmland (*t'un-t'ien*) on the borders also constituted a special kind of state land. Private land, on the other hand, was owned by an individual, generally a peasant cultivator, and could be freely bought, sold, or let. Land owned by powerful families came under this latter heading.

Accumulation of landholdings by local clans or families was probably well under way in the Warring States period, as is borne out by some early anecdotes. The *Han-fei-tzu* mentions men who cultivated others' fields for pay. Ch'en She, leader of the first peasant revolt against Ch'in, had once been a hired agricultural laborer. Early in Former Han the scholar Tung Chung-shu attributed the rise of great landowners to the abolition of the "well field" (*ching-t'ien*) system by Shang Yang and the free buying and selling of land which ensued.[16]

Ownership of great tracts of land developed in conjunction with natural calamities and the Han taxation system. The peasant farmer lived on the margin of subsistence. As pointed out by Ch'ao Ts'o in the reign of Wen-ti (180–157 B.C.), a typical peasant family of five members, including two adult males liable to labor service, however hard they worked, would be unable to cultivate more than 100 *mou* (4.57 hectares; 11.3 acres), or to

16 See Katō Shigeshi, "Shina kodensei no kenkyū," in his *Shina keizaishi kōshō* (Tokyo, 1952–53), Vol. I, pp. 511–690. The attribution to Shang Yang of the abolition of the *ching-t'ien* system is hardly credible, but the importance of a free market in land in the process of rural impoverishment remains valid.

obtain a crop of more than 100 *shih* of grain (2000 liters). Even though the burden of year-round cultivation and labor service was very heavy, this would be greatly increased in times of flood or drought or of exceptionally high taxation. The peasants were then forced to sell their crops at half the market price or to borrow money at high interest rates. Entrapped in a spiral of debt, they ultimately had to dispose of their land, their houses, and even their children. Land sold in this way came into the hands of local wealthy people, merchants or usurers, mostly members of powerful families, who thus built up large holdings. The process took place in both the old settlements and the new communities established on lands opened up by state irrigation projects.

Large landholdings were let out to landless peasants or cultivated by hired laborers or by slaves who, in the Han period, were either state or privately owned. The former category consisted of the families of criminals, prisoners of war, or confiscated private slaves; the latter were peasants sold into slavery as a result of debt, or state slaves who had been bestowed upon aristocrats and high officials as a reward for their services. The state generally aimed to prevent the sale of peasants into slavery and the consequent decline in the numbers of independent peasants, as is shown by the attempts of the Han founder Kao-ti (r. 206–195 B.C.) and of Kuang-wu-ti (r. A.D. 25–57), first emperor of the Later Han, to liberate peasants enslaved after the wars. There were nonetheless considerable numbers of both types of slaves throughout the Han period. State-owned slaves were employed for miscellaneous duties, such as work in state-run factories and agriculture, while private slaves were used in farming and domestic service (often as entertainers) by high officials or powerful families.[17]

Most of the landowners' holdings were not, however, cultivated by slaves or hired laborers, but were rented out to landless peasants. As early as the reign of Wu-ti (141–87 B.C.), Tung Chung-shu protested against the fact that the rich possessed vast tracts of land while the poor, with not a piece of ground to call their own, worked the fields and paid as much as half their crop in rent. He demanded a law to restrict land ownership, but there is no evidence that his proposals were ever put into effect.

Toward the end of Former Han the problem of the great estates became more critical. At the accession of Ai-ti, in 7 B.C., a number of restrictions were suggested on the initiative of K'ung Kuang, the chancellor, and Ho Wu, the imperial counsellor.[18] These proposals envisioned limiting the

17 See Wilbur, *Slavery in China*, pp. 165f. for an estimate that slaves never exceeded one percent of the population; Ch'ü T'ung-tsu, *Han social structure*, ed. Jack L. Dull (Seattle and London, 1972), pp. 139–59, 361–81; Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp. 63f. and passim.

18 *Han shu* 24A, p. 1142 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 201f.).

areas where kings and marquises would be entitled to own land, and restricting their holdings to a maximum of about 30 *ch'ing* (340 acres). In addition, the maximum number of slaves that could be owned was fixed at two hundred for kings, one hundred for *kuan-nei* marquises and imperial princesses, and thirty for marquises, officials, and other individuals. The penalty for infringing these regulations after three years had passed would be confiscation of the land and slaves in question. At the time when these suggestions were made, the prices of land and slaves dropped sharply. Not surprisingly, there was much opposition to the measure from those with vested interests, such as the unscrupulous and enormously rich favorites of the Ting and Fu families and Tung Hsien, and it was never carried out.

Though the growth of large-scale land ownership was now clearly beyond state control, another attempt to regulate it was made by Wang Mang soon after his accession as emperor in A.D. 9.[19] He aimed, in effect, to bring all land (which he renamed "the king's fields," *wang-t'ien*) under state ownership and to end slavery by prohibiting all trade in slaves. In addition, all families with fewer than eight male members and more than a specified amount of land were to divide any surplus plots they held among their relations and local persons; the landless were to be given holdings up to this size. Noncompliance might be punishable by death. This combination of a law restricting land ownership, which had already proved impractical, with features of the well field (*ching-t'ien*) system, and a total ban on the sale of land, houses, and slaves, naturally proved exceedingly difficult to enforce, and it had to be repealed within three years. Moreover, the violent opposition which it aroused among powerful landowning families and peasants alike was one contributory factor in the revolts which caused Wang Mang's downfall.

By the Later Han period, the existence of great landholdings had become accepted as a matter of course, and the state made no further attempts to restrict it. The only protests came from a few thinkers at the end of Later Han who were concerned with social justice, notably Hsün Yüeh (A.D. 148–209), who advocated a revival of the well field system,[20] and Chung-ch'ang T'ung. By this time, however, many high government offices were occupied by members of powerful families who used their positions to increase their landholdings and thus their local influence. Liu Hsiu, who overthrew Wang Mang and became the first of the Later Han emperors in A.D. 25, derived most of his support from the powerful families of the

19 *HS* 24A, pp. 1143–44 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 208f.).

20 For Hsün Yüeh's views, see Chen Chi-yun, *Hsün Yüeh (A.D. 148–209): The life and reflections of an early medieval Confucian* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 158f.; and Ch'en Ch'i-yün, *Hsün Yüeh and the mind of Late Han China* (Princeton, 1980), pp. 92f.

Nan-yang district, all of whom were great landowners. Land ownership was to some extent protected by the state; when Kuang-wu-ti ordered a survey of land throughout the empire, many false reports were presented both from the capital, Lo-yang, where officials and aristocrats held much land, and from Nan-yang, the home of the emperor himself and of his chief army commanders.

The growth of such holdings greatly weakened the Han government's attempts to exert direct control over the peasantry, from whom it required tax revenues and labor service, and resulted in considerable decentralization toward the end of Later Han. On the other hand, a great many peasants who were subject to the control and exploitation of both the great landowners and the state were driven by their poverty to rise in revolts like those of the Yellow Turbans. These rebellions eventually brought about the end of the dynasty.

To sum up: the typical rural community during Han was the hamlet (*li*), consisting in theory of a hundred families, all of which owned small amounts of land. They had few family ties and were organized hierarchically through the state rank system. Strong kinship solidarity did, however, continue to exist in some older hamlets. Owing to changing economic and social conditions, some peasants lost their lands and became tenants of the great landowners, whose growth was to alter the structure of the rural communities and exert great influence on the government. It must be noted that the rise of great landholdings during Han did not necessarily imply the development of large-scale farming, except in the few cases where slaves were employed to work estates. Tenants of these landowners cultivated their holdings on an individual and small-scale basis and this, due largely to the lack of sufficient slave labor and the intensive nature of farming, continued to be an important feature of Chinese agriculture.

The development of dry field agriculture in north China

From the point of view of agriculture, the country may be divided into two main regions, north and south China, separated by the eastward-flowing Huai River and in the west by the Ch'in-ling Mountains. The two regions are sharply different in climate. The North China Plain and the northwest loess regions have only light rainfall, between 400 and 800 mm a year. The loess area proper is covered by wind-deposited primary loess, while the plain consists of alluvium deposited by the Yellow River as a result of its erosion of the loess heights. Both regions are extremely fertile, their soils having in common the fine capillary structure characteristic of loess. South of the middle and lower Yangtze and in the Szechwan Basin, however,

there is heavier rainfall, between 800 and 1500 mm annually, and no loess. The dividing line between the two regions thus coincides with the line along the southern edge of the loess area, where the rainfall is 800 mm per year, and with the isotherm indicating an average winter temperature of 1 degree Centigrade.

Owing to these natural conditions, the northern area is characterized by dry-field and the southern by paddy-field agriculture. (This environmental division also frequently coincided with political separation, as during the Northern and Southern Dynasties.) The development of Chinese society, economy, and agricultural techniques outlined above was centered in the northern area, which was also the heartland of Ch'in and Han civilization. Though agriculture had been practiced in the south from Neolithic times, and had been further developed in the southern kingdoms of the Warring States period, the south remained economically more backward than the north until the end of Han and beyond. Only in the period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties did the south become able to compete with the agricultural productivity of the north, and it was not until about the tenth century A.D. that it definitely outstripped the north to become the economic center of China. In Han the major agricultural area was still in the north, and it is here that the description of farming methods must begin.

As is revealed in phrases like "the five grains" (*wu-ku*) and "the nine grains" (*chiu-ku*), the major crops in ancient China were varied. Most common were wheat, hemp, beans, millet (*ho*), and the most important of all, a cereal called *chi*,[21] probably panicled millet. There were glutinous and nonglutinous varieties of both these types of millet and also various kinds of wheat, barley and beans, including soy beans. The most widely cultivated cereal crop in the Han was millet, which was grown in summer; wheat and barley were winter crops and cultivated in smaller quantities. Rice was sometimes grown on irrigated land, but on a very limited scale.

For information on methods of cultivation, we must rely on contemporary descriptions and the agricultural books which began to appear during the Warring States period. The titles of nine of these are listed in the *Han shu*, but all, with the exception of parts of the *Fan Sheng-chih shu*, are lost. Fortunately, the last four chapters of the *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu*, a philosophical

21 Hou-chi, legendary founder of the Chou was named after *chi*, whose identification has been disputed. A Ch'ing philologist, Ch'eng Yao-t'ien, conjectured that it was *kaoliang* (sorghum): see his "Chiu-ku k'ao," in the *Huang Ch'ing ching-chieh* 549, p. 1a. This, however, is unlikely, as *kaoliang* is not mentioned in the *Ch'i-min yao-shu*, a famous agricultural work of the sixth century, and did not become a major crop in north China until after the Sung period. *Chi* was most probably akin to *ho* or millet (a crop cultivated in China since the Shang dynasty) and has been identified with reasonable certainty as panicled millet. For the different varieties of millet, see Joseph Needham, *Science and civilisation in China:* Vol VI, Biology and biological technology, Part II: Francesca Bray, Agriculture (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 434f.

work written at the Ch'in court toward the end of the Warring States period, contain accounts of contemporary farming procedures, though their main purpose is to explain the reasons for the philosophical importance of agriculture and to guide statesmen in the formation of agricultural policy.[22]

It has been conjectured from these sections of the *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* that the common practice was as follows. After plowing the land several times to break up the soil, the farmer dug a series of furrows 6 *ch'ih* (1.38 m) apart, each furrow being the width of the spade (8 *ts'un* or 18.4 cm). Each ridge between the furrows was thus 6 *ch'ih* wide (the same length as the spade) and was called a *mou*, a term which subsequently came to be used as a standard measure of land.[23] The seeds were scattered over this wide ridge, not in rows, and when they sprouted could be neatly thinned out and weeded by the farmer standing in the adjoining furrow to work. The distance left between the sprouts was determined by the size of the implement used for thinning; as the handle of this was very short, the task was a laborious one necessitating constant crouching. Although oxen could be used for the preliminary plowing, all other stages of cultivation required intensive human labor. This method, which was already practiced before the Warring States period, may have continued in use after the Ch'in and Han dynasties.

In Former Han, toward the end of Wu-ti's reign, a new and improved system greatly increased agricultural productivity. This was devised by Chao Kuo, who held the office of grain intendant (*sou-su tu-wei*). This was the "alternating fields system" (*tai-t'ien fa*),[24] whereby three furrows, each 1 *ch'ih* (0.23 m) wide and 1 *ch'ih* deep, were ploughed in every *mou*, the *mou* by this time measuring a strip 1 *pu* (6 *ch'ih*; 1.38 m) wide by 240 *pu* long (331 m; thus an area of .113 acres). The seeds were sown in a straight line in the furrows and not on the ridges. In the course of weeding, earth from the ridges gradually fell down into the furrows, covering the roots of the sprouting crops so that by midsummer ridges and furrows were level with each other and the crops so deeply rooted as to be protected from wind and drought. The next year the positions of ridges and furrows were reversed; hence the name of the new method. It was accompanied by the invention of

22 For a detailed commentary on these chapters, see Hsia Wei-ying, *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu shang-nung teng ssu p'ien chiao-shih* (Peking, 1956).

23 The size of an area of land was originally measured in terms of the number of ridges, and the word *mou* or ridge thus became the unit of measurement. A pre-Han *mou* was commonly 6 *ch'ih* (1 *pu*. 1.38 m) wide and 100 *pu* (138 m) long; in the Han it was 1 *pu* in width and 240 *pu* (331 m) in length.

24 For this new method of farming see *HS* 24A, pp. 1138f. (Nancy Lee Swann, *Food and money in ancient China* [Princeton, 1950], pp. 184f.); Nishijima Sadao, *Chūgoku keizaishi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1966), pp. 61–184. Michael Loewe, *Records of Han administration* (Cambridge, 1967), Vol. II, pp. 319, 329 note 10.

an improved plow with two shares, which was drawn by a pair of oxen and guided by a team of three men. As a result of these advances, yields were said to have been increased by about twenty liters per *mou* and double this in the case of really efficient management.

The new method had several other advantages over the old. It meant that for the first time crops could be grown in straight rows continuously from sowing to harvest, and that moisture in the soil could more easily be conserved. Oxen could now be used for plowing, thus making it possible to cultivate a larger area with the same amount of human labor. Damage and loss of crops from wind and drought was more easily prevented, and it was possible to use a long-handled hoe for weeding, saving time and effort. Finally, the yearly alternation of ridge and furrow helped to conserve the fertility of the soil and stabilize annual yields.

Chao Kuo made systematic efforts to promote this system in the vicinity of the capital. New tools were specially made by slaves attached to the superintendent of agriculture (*ta-ssu-nung*), and instruction in their use and in the new techniques was given to heads of counties, districts, and hamlets by the administrators of their commanderies. Although there was a shortage of oxen among the common people, it was found that the method could still be operated effectively using human labor; a large number of men together could work as much as thirty *mou* (3.4 acres) a day. Chao Kuo had first set the guards of the palace outside Ch'ang-an to practicing this method of cultivation, and on observing the increased yields, he extended it to the areas from which these guards originally came – that is, to the state-owned lands in the three metropolitan areas (*san-fu*) around the capital and on the frontiers. In time it came to be widely used by the peasantry in these regions and in the provinces of Ho-tung and Hung-nung. It was also practiced as far afield as the state-sponsored settlements of Chü-yen, near the northwestern extremity of the empire. Probably the introduction of the alternate fields technique is to be dated after the death of Wu-ti (87 B.C.).[25]

Very likely the real power behind the promotion of the alternate fields system was not Chao Kuo but Sang Hung-yang, who continued to have great influence in the government after Wu-ti's death. The son of a Lo-

25 There is some confusion about the date when the *tai-t'ien fa* was first introduced. *HS* 24 asserts that it was inaugurated towards the end of Wu-ti's reign as part of a physiocratic policy designed to rebuild the national resources, which had been seriously depleted by the emperor's military campaigns. Chao Kuo is said to have been responsible for its implementation in his capacity as grain intendant, *sou-su tu-wei*; but as the office of *sou-su tu-wei* in the late years of Wu-ti until 87 B.C., the year of the emperor's death, was actually held by Sang Hung-yang, Chao Kuo can only have been appointed to it in that year or later. It is therefore probable that the *tai-t'ien* method was put into effect only after the reign of Wu-ti. A reference in the Chü-yen wooden strips to a storehouse named after the new system, the *tai-t'ien ts'ang*, proves in addition that it really was carried out in the Chü-yen area. See Nishijima, *Chūgoku keizaishi kenkyū*, pp. 101f.

yang merchant, he had in his youth been a personal attendant of Wu-ti and subsequently was made responsible for the administration of the government salt and iron monopolies. In his capacity as imperial counsellor (*yü-shih ta-fu*), he attempted to continue Wu-ti's financial policies into the next reign, despite opposition from such men as Huo Kuang, the general-in-chief (*ta chiang-chün*), who was later to prosecute him and his followers for treason. It was Huo Kuang who in 81 B.C. summoned Confucian scholars from all parts of China to debate with Sang Hung-yang and other ministers the question of whether Wu-ti's salt and iron monopolies and other schemes should be continued. From the *Discourses on salt and iron*, the record of this debate compiled some time afterward by Huan K'uan, it appears that Sang Hung-yang and his followers defended the monopolies on the grounds that they enriched the state and built up resources for defense against the invading Hsiung-nu. The critics opposed them on the grounds that such competition for profit between government and people could only benefit the former at the expense of the latter. Although this had no direct bearing on the alternate fields system, it does illustrate the contemporary economic conditions from which it arose.

The state-owned land (*kung-t'ien*) on which the new method of cultivation was first put into practice was in theory worked under the direct control of the central government, and all profits formed part of state revenues. Possibilities of increased productivity undoubtedly lay behind the adoption of the system, particularly on the military farmlands on the borders which supplied the food for their garrisons. The critics in the salt and iron debates, however, claimed that such state-owned lands, especially in the three metropolitan areas, were in practice not worked by the authorities, but rented out to powerful persons who alone enjoyed the benefits, and that these state holdings should therefore be given over to the general public. Thus it appears that the actual beneficiaries of the alternate fields system, as implemented on state lands, may have been powerful families rather than the government treasury.

The promotion of the alternate fields method among the common people also met with great difficulties. The use of human labor for plowing, necessitated by the shortage of oxen, proved inefficient and exhausting. Moreover, iron implements manufactured under the state iron monopoly were too large for practical use.[26] Peasants soon reverted to their traditional wooden tools and weeding by hand. On the other hand, wealthy families who could afford oxen and iron tools derived much benefit from the new method.

26 This may imply that the tools were intended for plowing with oxen and were of no use to peasants who did not possess these and could use only human labor.

By the end of Later Han a more sophisticated version of Chao Kuo's improved plow was in use, at least in the three metropolitan areas. As described by Ts'ui Shih in his *Cheng-lun*,[27] it was equipped with three plowshares, a seed box, and an implement for turning down the soil again, and required only one man to guide it. With this it was possible to sow more than one *ch'ing* (11.3 acres) of land in a day. Technical advances of this kind made the alternate fields system even more profitable, and its application was widespread toward the end of the dynasty.

One noteworthy event in the history of Chinese agriculture after the inception of the alternate fields method was the writing of a manual on farming techniques by Fan Sheng-chih, who was active in the reign of Ch'eng-ti (33–7 B.C.). Little is known of his life, but from allusions in various works it appears that he held the office of gentleman consultant (*i-lang*), that he was responsible for instructing farmers to cultivate wheat in the three metropolitan areas, and that he later became an official of the secretariat. His work, entitled *Fan Sheng-chih shu*, is the only surviving representative of the various types of agricultural books listed in the bibliographical chapter of the *Han shu*, and it is the only one of which we know anything about the contents. The complete book has long since been lost, but parts of it, over three thousand characters in all, have been reconstructed from the fragmentary quotations found in other works.[28]

Besides the general theory of plowing, sowing, and harvesting, the book contains a detailed discussion of methods of raising such crops as millet, wheat, rice, deccan grass, soy beans, hemp, melons, gourds, taro root, and mulberries, and also describes the technique of intensive cultivation known as the *ou-t'ien* (pit field) system.

In addition to this practical advice, the work included sections on fortune-telling based on the *yin-yang* and Five Phases theory, which pervaded all Han thought. But all told, the tone of the *Fan Sheng-chih shu* is predominantly practical and empirical, in marked contrast to the last four chapters of the *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu*, with their emphasis on overall agricultural policy. It is for this reason that its author is considered to be the founder of agricultural science in China.

One notable feature of the work is the description of the method for obtaining increased yields known as *ou-t'ien fa*. There are two variants of this, sowing in furrows and sowing in pits. In the former, a standard *mou* of

27 As quoted in the first volume of the *Ch'i-min yao-shu*. See Shih Sheng-han, *Ch'i-min yao-shu chin-shih* (Peking, 1957), Vol. I, p. 13.

28 For the collected fragments see Shih Sheng-han, *Fan Sheng-chih shu chin shih* (Peking, 1956). The fragments are translated into English in Shih Sheng-han, *On "Fan Sheng-chih shu": An agriculturalist book of China written by Fan Sheng-chih in the first century* B.C. (Peking, 1959); and also in Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp. 280f.

land 30 *pu* (41.4 m) long by 8 *pu* (11 m) wide is divided across into fifteen plots, with narrow footpaths left between them. The plots are then each divided breadthwise by twenty-four ditches in which the seeds are sown. If, as in the case of spiked and glutinous millet, there are two rows of plants 5 *ts'un* (11.5 cm) apart in each ditch, this means that over 15,000 plants can be grown in one *mou*.[29] The distance between plants and the total per *mou* vary, of course, according to the kind of crop.

Where the method of sowing in shallow pits is employed, the standard unit of land is divided into grids 1 *ch'ih* (23 cm) and 5 *ts'un* (11.5 cm) square, in each of which is dug a small pit, called an *ou*, 6 *ts'un* (13.8 cm) deep and 6 *ts'un* wide. One *mou* thus contains 3,840 of these pits. Twenty seeds are sown in each pit, on which is used 1 *sheng* (0.2 liter) of good manure mixed well with the soil. The total of 2 *sheng* of seeds sown in every *mou* will produce 3 *sheng* (0.6 liter) of grain per pit and thus 100 *shih* (2,000 liters) per *mou* (0.113 acre). One thousand *shih* (20,000 liters), the annual produce on 10 *mou* of land, is calculated to provide a twenty-six-year food supply for the cultivators. These figures apply to the best class of land; on middle- and lower-grade land, where pits have to be made larger and farther apart, the yields are proportionately lower.[30]

The advantages of this system were several. Only the actual pits in which the seeds were sown had to be cultivated and supplied with water and manure, and fertile land was not essential; it was even possible to use this method in upland areas and on sloping ground where there were problems of water supply. Unlike the alternate fields method, it did not require plowing with oxen, and yields were extremely high. Fan Sheng-chih devised and popularized the method, practical even for very poor peasants, in cooperation with the government, which was anxious to sustain the peasants as the chief base of its power and preserve them from the steady encroachments of the large landowners.

Despite these and subsequent efforts to promote it (notably in the Later Han, Three Kingdoms and Northern Wei, Chin, Yüan, Ming, and Ch'ing dynasties), the system never really became sufficiently established to effect lasting changes in the agriculture of north China. The principal drawback seems always to have been that it required a very intensive input of labor and was unlikely to raise per capita productivity to any great extent. Thus while Fan Sheng-chih's work was valuable for its description of the fundamental system of dry field agriculture in north China (in which respect it

29 The text reads 15,750, but this figure does not accord with others that are given in the same passage. The total has been variously calculated at 15,840 or 15,180 plants. See Shih, *Fan Sheng-chih shu*, pp. 38–42.

30 See Shih, *Fan Sheng-chih shu*, pp. 43f.

exercised a great influence on the *Ch'i-min yao-shu* written in the sixth century), the *ou-t'ien* method still left much to be desired.

One further point which should be mentioned in connection with Fan Sheng-chih's work concerns wheat. Prior to his time, an attempt had been made to encourage the cultivation of wheat in the metropolitan area, in terms which suggest that the culture of this crop was regarded somewhat differently from that of other cereals.[31] Fan Sheng-chih refers to wheat fields as being kept completely separate from those for other crops. Wheat fields were to be plowed twice, in the fifth and sixth months, thus making it impossible for other crops to be grown on them during the summer. This is the same method of growing wheat as that described in the *Ch'i-min yao-shu*, and shows that it was not yet common practice to raise two crops in one year or three crops in two years. This development became normal only after the second half of the T'ang dynasty.

As no outstanding agricultural writings of Later Han are extant, little is known of the development of dry field agriculture in this period. The only relevant work to survive, again only in fragments, is the *Ssu-min yüeh-ling* by Ts'ui Shih, who lived toward the end of the dynasty. The book is not limited merely to a description of farming techniques and therefore gives some general idea of contemporary conditions affecting agriculture.

Ts'ui Shih was born into a powerful family in the area of present Peking and held various posts during the reigns of Huan-ti (A.D. 146–168) and Ling-ti (A.D. 168–189), including those of commandery governor (in which post he was very successful) and member of the secretariat (*shang-shu*). He is also remembered as the author of the *Cheng-lun*, a discussion of the problems of contemporary politics, of which some fragments survive. When reading the *Ssu-min yüeh-ling* it is important to remember that its author, besides being a member of a great family and inheriting the tradition of scholarship from his father and grandfather, lived at the time when the Later Han dynasty was in a state of decline and society was about to be disrupted by the persecution of the men of letters and the rebellions of the Yellow Turbans.

The complete text of the *Ssu-min yüeh-ling* is lost and has had to be partially reconstructed from fragments.[32] The term *yüeh-ling*, indicating the monthly events of the year, is taken from the title of a chapter in the *Li-chi*, but whereas the *Li-chi* chapter is concerned with the activities of

31 See *HS* 24A, p. 1137 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 177f.).

32 See the critical reconstruction with commentary by Shih Sheng-han, *Ssu-min yüeh-ling chiao-chu* (Peking, 1965). Translations are available in Christine Herzer, "Das Szu-min yüeh-ling des Ts'ui Shih: Ein Bauern-Kalender aus der Späteren Han-Zeit," Diss. Hamburg Univ., 1963; Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp. 280–94; Patricia Ebrey, "Estate and family management in the Later Han as seen in the *Monthly instructions for the four classes of people*, *JESHO*, 17:2 (1974), 173–205.

the scholar or statesman class, the scope of the *Ssu-min yüeh-ling* embraces all four main social groups (statesmen, farmers, craftsmen, and merchants), though it does not describe their activities separately. In practice, probably only the powerful families could have been able to manage the large variety of activities dealt with in the *Ssu-min yüeh-ling* and it seems safe to assume that the work is primarily concerned with them. Its instructions on the festivals and rituals for maintaining family unity and on the proper times for farming and household tasks, defense, and trade give a good idea of the life led by these powerful families and of contemporary conditions in agriculture.

The most important directives in the *Ssu-min yüeh-ling* are concerned with the monthly festivals and rituals, especially those for ancestor worship. These began with the Great Festival on the first day of the first month and were followed by others in the second, sixth, eighth, eleventh, and twelfth months. Ancestor worship was supplemented by that of household and agricultural deities, the former including the gods of the gate, doors, stove, and well. It should be noted that the ancestor worship and visits to ancestral tombs which took place on specified days of the second and eighth months clashed with the biannual festivals of the hamlet (*li*), which also traditionally occurred during those days but which are not mentioned in the *Ssu-min yüeh-ling*. This indicates that powerful local families in this period did not always cooperate with the *li* system as the basis of social order in the community.

The *Ssu-min yüeh-ling* pays particular attention to the subject of kinship solidarity. Besides ceremonial greetings exchanged between relatives at the New Year, it prescribes practical measures of relief for kinsmen and relatives by marriage. These include donations to poor members in the third month, before the crops had grown, and for the bereaved and infirm in the ninth month, to sustain them against the coming winter. It is evident from this that the extended families were composed of a number of patriarchal families of varying degrees of prosperity, each of which had its own land and cultivated it separately.

The patriarchal family, as defined in the *Ssu-min yüeh-ling*, included besides the family members, various kinds of domestic slaves or servants engaged in such activities as weaving and sewing, washing, brewing, and raising silkworms. The statement "Finally. . .nominate the family members to be engaged in farming and thus be prepared for the start of the work in the next year"[33] suggests that production and management were carried out primarily by the family, rather than by slaves or tenants.

33 Shih, *Ssu-min yüeh-ling chiao-chu*, p. 77.

Furthermore, the detailed instructions on all stages of farming are such as to indicate self-sufficient and large-scale agriculture. That the older boys of the household were set to agricultural tasks is proved by the fact that their schooling (in which they studied the Five Classics) took place only in the slack season for agriculture, unlike that of the younger boys, which was apparently full time. Large-scale farming could not have been carried out entirely by the family head and his dependents, however, and it is therefore possible that slaves and hired labor were also used. Tenancy, though not mentioned in the *Ssu-min yüeh-ling*, may well have existed among the poor peasants on the periphery of prosperous farms.

The existence of poor peasants near the prosperous estates is suggested by the numerous instructions in the *Ssu-min yüeh-ling* on the buying and selling of commodities. Some commodities were both bought and sold, and the commodities dealt in included straw shoes and wheat seed, indicating a rural rather than an urban market. It seems, therefore, that the purpose of dealing in such products (which were not needed for consumption by the large-scale producer) was simply to gain profit from the peasantry. As the peasants in this period had to pay their increasingly heavy taxes (apart from the land tax) in cash, they were driven to sell their crops at harvest time in order to get the necessary coins, and then buy them back again in the off-season when they were in need of food and seeds.[34]

The development of paddy field agriculture in central and south China

The discussion of this topic must center on conditions in the middle and lower Yangtze regions, for while agriculture had developed in the Szechwan basin from the late Warring States period, and along the Pearl River in south China from Ch'in times onward, there are no historical materials available on these areas apart from stone reliefs and funerary objects. During the Han dynasty, agriculture along the Yangtze was still greatly inferior in productivity to that of north China. The growing of rice in this area in Former Han is described in the *Han shu* as "plowing with fire and weeding with water" and is said to have been practiced in areas where there were few people, plenty of land, and an abundance of fruit and shellfish. With such favorable natural conditions and an absence of shortages, there were few incentives to develop intensive methods of cultivation. Social organization remained primitive, and the money economy scarcely existed.

The clue to this backwardness lies in the nature of the method of

34 Another writer has calculated that a farming household needed to find cash to pay for a quarter of its basic expenses. See Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp. 67–80.

cultivation known as "plowing with fire and weeding with water."[35] Because the original sources give no exact descriptions, recourse must be had to the various commentaries explaining the term, the most reliable of which is that given by Ying Shao (died ca. A.D. 204),[36] which reads as follows:

Burn off the weeds, then pour on water and sow the rice seeds. Both the surviving roots of the weeds and the rice will sprout. When they are 7 or 8 *ts'un* [16–18.5 cm] high, cut down all [the weeds] and again water. The weeds will have withered and only the rice will grow. This is called to "plow with fire and weed with water."

Clearly the method was one of sowing seeds directly into the paddy field and did not entail transplantation. The initial watering in the two-stage process was intended to stimulate sprouting; the second watering, during the period of growth, was to get rid of weeds. Seeds must have been sown in rows to facilitate weeding during the early stage of growth. What is not clear from Ying Shao's explanation is whether or not the fields were used consecutively or left fallow until the next planting – whether the weeds to be burned had grown during the preceding fallow period or were those that had sprung up immediately after harvesting, or even whether they were old stubble.

Fortunately, additional information on growing rice is provided by Cheng Hsüan (A.D. 127–200) in his commentary on the *Chou-li;* the relevant passage is as follows:[37]

When growing rice in a low-lying, wet area, prepare the paddy field by drawing water over it in the sixth month after a heavy rainfall so as to let the weeds perish. Get rid of any surviving weeds in the autumn when the water dries up. Rice should be grown on this field in the next year.

This contains no reference to burning weeds, but does show that the field was left fallow for a year. Other sources prove that the method of "plowing with fire and weeding with water" was still practiced when Ying Shao and Cheng Hsüan wrote; as they must have been describing the same thing, it is most probable that Ying Shao's account also implies the fallow method.

Further confirmation is furnished by the *Ch'i-min yao-shu*, which in the sixth century gave a description of rice cultivation that is basically the same as that of Ying Shao:[38]

35 The expression *huo-keng shui-nuo* appears in a number of texts: *Shih-chi* 30, p. 1437; *YTL* 2, p. 20 (Gale, *Discourses on salt and iron* pp. 18–19); *HS* 6, p. 182 (Homer H. Dubs, *The History of the Former Han dynasty* [Baltimore, 1938–55], Vol. II, p. 72); etc. It has also been rendered "to till the land with fire and hoe it with water." See Lien-sheng Yang, "Notes on the economic history of the Chin dynasty," *Studies in Chinese institutional history* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), p. 175. See also Hsu, *Han agriculture*, p. 120. 36 In his commentary to *HS* 6, p. 183.

37 *Chou-li* 4, f.34a (note). See chapter on Ti-kuan, Tao-jen in the *Chou-li*.

38 Shih, *Ch'i-min yao-shu chin-shih*, Vol. I, pp. 110f.

For growing rice it does not matter whether or not one chooses fertile land, but it is advisable to lay the land fallow for a year. It is also better to grow it on land along the upper reaches of a river [not for the sake of the fertility of the land but for the sake of clean water, which is good for rice]. The best time for sowing rice is the third month, followed by the first ten days of the fourth month, with the second ten days of the fourth month being the worst time. First draw water in the field and ten days later flatten it ten times with a roller; [the more one does this the better the result will be]. When the field becomes fit for seeding, select the seeds by rinsing them in water; [those which float on the surface must be thrown away for they will grow into barnyard grasses in the autumn]. Soak them in water for three nights, then take them out and leave them covered inside a straw basket. In three nights sprouts about 2 *fen* [5 mm] in length will come out of them. Sow them at the rate of 3 *tou* [6 liters] per *mou* [0.113 acres]. During the third month, keep birds away to prevent them picking out the seeds. When the rice plants grow 7 or 8 *ts'un* [16–18.5 cm.] high, the weeds will grow too. Cut down the latter with a sickle when they are in water and they will die. When the weeding is finished let out the water to dry out the roots of the plants. . . . Paying close attention to the degree of moisture, let in water again. When the plants grow up sufficiently let the water out again. Harvest in the season of frost. If one harvests too early, rice is still greenish and soft; if too late, the grains fall off, resulting in decrease in the crop.

The principal reason for allowing the rice field to lie fallow for a year was that the transplantation method was not yet feasible and consequently weeding was extremely difficult; as Cheng Hsüan's description shows, it had to be done two or three times during the fallow period. This system of growing rice thus appears to have been less productive than methods of grain cultivation used in north China.

The fact that conditions north of the Huai River were unfavorable to growing rice by the paddy field method does not mean that it was never attempted there. Archeological investigation has shown that the cultivation of rice was characteristic of Lungshanoid sites, and there is indeed a reference to this crop in the *Shih-ching* (Book of songs).[39] The cultivation of rice in irrigated fields in the north during Han times is confirmed by both the *Fan Sheng-chih shu* and the *Ssu-min yüeh-ling*.

The relevant entries in these two works illustrate the differences in the methods of growing rice north and south of the Huai River. The advice in the *Fan Sheng-chih shu* reads:[40]

To plant rice: when it thaws in the spring, plow to turn over the ground. The rice field should not be too large, otherwise it is difficult to adjust the level of the standing water. . . . Sow ordinary rice in the third month, and glutinous rice in the fourth. Rice should be sown 110 days after the winter solstice. On good, fertile

39 Chang Kwang-chih, *The archaeology of ancient China*, 3rd ed. (New Haven and London, 1977), pp. 169, 181. 40 Shih, *Fan Sheng-chih shu*, pp. 21f.

land use 4 *sheng* [0.8 liters] of seeds per *mou* [0.113 acre]. In the early stages the rice plants have to be kept warm; to do this, make the inlet and outlet gaps on the ridge [surrounding the field] directly opposite to each other [so that the standing water will not circulate]. After the summer solstice when it is extremely hot make the gaps slanting [to make the water circulate and prevent it becoming too hot].

Here there is no reference to weeding, but it may be assumed that seeds were sown directly in the field without transplantation. In the *Ssu-min yüeh-ling* there is a highly revealing remark on rice cultivation:[41]

In the third month when sowing the seeds of glutinous rice, sow them thinly in the case of a fertile field and thickly in the case of an infertile one. . . .

In the fifth month divide rice and indigo plants, preferably within twenty days after the summer solstice.

To "divide the plants" is nothing but transplantation, and hence it appears that the transplantation method was first practiced in north China toward the end of the Later Han and later adopted in central China, which was at that time much less advanced.

Apart from these brief descriptions, there is no other illuminating reference to the growing of rice in paddy fields in north China until that given in the *Ch'i-min yao-shu* in the sixth century. After describing the rice crop south of the Huai River, it goes on:[42]

The terrain in the north is a high plain where there is neither reservoir nor pond, so for raising rice in the paddy choose places along the winding parts of rivers. In the second month when it thaws and the ground dries up, burn and turn it over, and draw in water. In ten days when the soil is crumbled to pieces level it with a wooden mallet. Sow seeds in the same manner [as that practiced south of the Huai River] mentioned earlier. When the plants grow to 7 or 8 *ts'un* [16–18.5 cm] transplant them. ([Note in the original]: Since this is not the fallow method the rice grows together with weeds and tares which cannot be gotten rid of with a sickle, so that it is necessary to transplant and to weed.) The manner of irrigation and harvesting are the same as the above-mentioned [method practiced in the area south of the Huai River].

It is important to note here that while the method of sowing seeds was exactly the same as that practiced south of the Huai River, the raising of rice in paddies was carried out only when along the winding part of a river and plants were transplanted when they reached a height of 7 or 8 *ts'un* (16–18.5 cm). This last point was evidently peculiar to rice agriculture in north China and seems to show how much more advanced in using transplantation this region still was.

41 i. *Ssu-min yüeh-ling* as cited in Shih, *Ch'i-min yao-shu chin-shih*, Vol. I, p. 118 (11.16.1). ii. Shih, *Ssu-min yüeh-ling chiao-chu*, p. 43.

42 Shih, *Ch'i-min yao-shu chin-shih*, Vol. I, p. 111 (11.6.1).

The normal reasons for rice transplantation are that it enables intensive care to be given to the young plants in the nursery; more plants can be obtained through separating out their offshoots; and the main field can be well fertilized and used for some other, winter crop while the rice seedlings are in the nursery. None of these advantages is, however, listed in the *Ch'i-min yao-shu*, which implies, on the contrary, that the sole purpose of transplantation is to facilitate weeding. Moreover, the fact that the method of seeding in the north was the same as that used in the south, where transplantation was not practiced, suggests that there was no special nursery field for the rice and in fact no distinction between the field for seeding and that for transplantation. The mere fact that the transplantation method was used in north China before the sixth century does not necessarily mean that it was superior in practice to the method employed south of the Huai River; its use was actually a result of restrictive natural conditions in the north.

As can be seen from the instructions in the *Ssu-min yüeh-ling*, the transplantation method in north China at this point was much less sophisticated than later versions of it. The major role in developing paddy-field rice cultivation was therefore played by central China, not the north, where rice was grown only on a very small scale. Despite the fact that the "plowing with fire and weeding with water" method used in central China was generally regarded as inferior to the dry-field agriculture of the north, overall agricultural productivity in the former area must have increased greatly during the Han period to support its growing population. A comparison of the census of A.D. 2 with that of A.D. 140 showed that by the latter year the number of households in central China exceeded that in north China.[43] While various interpretations of there figures are possible, it seems likely that an improvement in agricultural productivity was entailed and it is important to consider how this can have been brought about.

The method of "plowing with fire and weeding with water" described by Ying Shao and Cheng Hsüan at the end of Later Han may not have been exactly the same as its equivalent in the Former Han dynasty but, given its

43 In comparing the figures given by these two enumerations of population it should be borne in mind that the census of A.D. 140 was probably taken in abnormal conditions, the result of the frequent incursions that had recently ravaged north China. These raids had penetrated right into the interior, to the extent that in 139 orders had been given to establish three hundred defense posts in or close to the metropolitan region (see *HHS* 6, p. 269). For interpretations of the Han census figures see Lao Kan, "Liang Han hu-chi yü ti-li chih kuan-hsi," *CYYY*, 5:2 (1935), 179–214. An abridged translation of this is to be found as "Population and geography in the two Han dynasties," in *Chinese social history*, ed. E-tu Zen Sun and John De Francis (Washington D.C., 1956), pp. 83–101. See also Hans Bielenstein, "The census of China during the period 2–742 A.D.," *BMFEA*, 19 (1947), 125–63. Elsewhere (*The restoration of the Han dynasty*, Vol. III, *BMFEA*, 39 [1967], pp. 11f., 140f.), Bielenstein discusses the depopulation of the northwest owing to pressures from the Hsiung-nu and the Ch'iang tribes. See also Chapter 3 above, p. 270.

primitive nature, it cannot have been very different. What is more interesting is that the method as described by Ying Shao is almost identical with that given in the *Ch'i-min yao-shu,* written in the sixth century, which would seem to indicate that there was no improvement in the technique of growing rice in paddy fields south of the Huai between the Former Han period and the Northern and Southern dynasties. Only in the middle of the T'ang dynasty, from the eighth to the ninth centuries A.D., did the adoption of the transplantation method make it possible to grow two cereal crops a year in central China and thus greatly increase the agricultural productivity of the region. It is hard to believe that there was no improvement in yields before this period, however, in view of the probability that it was the agricultural productivity of the area which made possible the cultivation of the lands along the Yangtze in Later Han and the existence of the states south of the Yangtze in the Three Kingdoms and Northern and Southern dynasties period.

The water necessary for the "plowing with fire and weeding with water" method had to be supplied by means of irrigation. Irrigation works as developed in north China and intended for dry field agriculture usually entailed damming the upper reach of a river and digging a canal (*ch'ü*) from it. Farther south, the procedure was to build a dam at the end of a small valley, forming a reservoir (*p'i*) behind it, from which water was drawn through a sluice. Examples of such dams in the Huai River basin are known from the Spring and Autumn period onward and their use increased from the end of Former Han.

These two systems of irrigation differed greatly not only in the methods, but in the agents of their construction. Canals, which required large-scale excavations, could be constructed only through state enterprise, whereas the building of reservoirs did not need such great resources and was therefore frequently undertaken by powerful local families. Much of the development of central China was promoted by powerful families in this way, an example being Fan Chung, a maternal grandfather of Kuang-wu-ti, who irrigated his large landholdings in the Nan-yang area with such reservoirs. In Later Han many similar projects were undertaken by local officials, though powerful families almost invariably participated.

The improvements in agricultural productivity south of the Huai were not, however, the consequence of any great innovations in the technique of rice growing (which continued to be practiced by the old method of "plowing with fire and weeding with water"). Rather, they resulted from an expansion of the area under paddy-field cultivation, which was brought about by the increased construction of irrigation projects from Han onward. Thus, paddy-field agriculture in this region gradually spread over such a

large area that by the Northern and Southern dynasties period it was at last able to compete with the north in agricultural importance.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CITIES, COMMERCE, AND MANUFACTURING

Cities and merchants

The type of city which existed in China before the Warring States period (and which may indeed have originated as early as the Shang period) was merely a center of political authority inhabited by members of its nobility; it was not generally characterized by a great deal of commercial activity. But with the development of commerce, handicrafts, and a money economy in the Warring States period, new cities appeared (especially at strategic points and on trade routes), which in addition to being the capitals of states or centers of local administration, also functioned as important trading centers. The great Han cities were descended from those of the Warring States period and included such places as Ch'ang-an, the capital, in present Shensi; Cho, Chi, and Han-tan in present Hopei; Hsing-yang, Wan, and Lo-yang in Honan; Lin-tzu in Shantung; Ch'eng-tu in Szechwan; and P'an-yü near the modern city of Canton. The fact that the majority of these cities were in north China shows that commerce was then largely confined to this area and did not extend to the middle and lower Yangtze regions.

The *Han shu* includes figures, not always complete or accurate, for the households and sometimes the individuals registered in ten selected counties. These range in size from 40,196 to 80,800 households and from 109,000 to 246,000 persons.[44] Possibly these few cases were chosen as examples of counties containing very prosperous and populous cities, and the figures are certainly not representative of all the towns of the empire, which certainly numbered 1,500 or more (at least one in each county). It may, however, be surmised that some cities were even larger than those for which figures are given. It has been estimated, for example, that the total population of Lo-yang when it was the capital of Later Han was of the order of half a million.[45]

A short description of that city appears elsewhere in this volume.[46] For Former Han, the only city on which very much information has survived is the capital, Ch'ang-an, which was built near the old Ch'in capital of Hsien-yang, about 10 kilometers west of the present Sian. Its construction

44 Some of the figures for individuals have been calculated on the basis of those given for households, not being included in the *Han shu* itself. See Utsunomiya Kiyoyoshi, *Kandai shakai keizaishi kenkyū*, pp. 112f.

45 See Hans Bielenstein, "Lo-yang in Later Han times," *BMFEA*, 48 (1976), 19–20.

46 See Chapter 3 above, pp. 262f.

began in the seventh year of Kao-ti (200 B.C.), and it was completed in the reign of Hui-ti (195–188 B.C.) after massive extensions had been made, starting in 194 B.C. with the building of the walls. In 192 B.C. 146,000 people living within 250 kilometers (150 miles) of the city were said to have been recruited to work for thirty days on the strengthening of the walls; their efforts were augmented by the continuous labor of 20,000 convicts. In 190 B.C. 145,000 people were again employed on it for thirty days, until it was completed in the ninth month of the same year.[47]

When finished, the city is said to have measured 32 *li* and 18 *pu* (13,300 meters) in length and breadth, with an area of some 44.5 square kilometers (1,100 acres). Recent excavations have, however, been interpreted to show that the east side measured 5,940 meters, the south 6,250 meters, the west 4,550 meters, and the north 5,950 meters – the total circumference actually extending to 25,100 meters. Unlike the later T'ang city, it was irregular in shape, only the east side being straight. Ideas on city planning were not yet common, and the irregularities are explained by the fact that the streets and palaces were built first and later encircled by the walls.[48] The exact number of households inside the walls is unknown, but it is estimated to have been at the least 80,000 and at the most 160,000.

Ch'ang-an inside the walls was divided up into 160 residential wards or *li*, each with its own walls and gate. Each ward was in the charge of a low-ranking official, the *li-cheng*, and social order was supposed to be maintained by the *fu-lao*, a group of influential persons from within the ward. Apart from these, and the separate imperial palaces and administrative sections, there was a government-controlled market area known as the Nine Markets. Of these, the most important were the East Market and the West Market. It was formerly thought that these two markets were inside the wall while the other seven were outside the city proper, but recent research contends that these two major markets included the other seven markets.[49] The system whereby all urban trading took place in officially designated markets continued until the end of the T'ang dynasty.

47 See *HS* 1B, p. 64 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 118); and *HS* 2, pp. 88–90 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, pp. 179–83).

48 These figures and conclusions are largely those reached by Wang Chung-shu in studies dated 1957–58. For more recent studies on the plan of Ch'ang-an, see Koga Noboru, "Kan Chōanjō no kensetsu puran; Sempaku kenkyō seido to no kankei o chūshin to shite", *TSK* 31:2 (1972), 28–60, and *Kan Chōanjō to sempaku, kenkyō teiri seido* (Tokyo, 1980); and Stephen Hotaling, "The city walls of Ch'ang-an," *TP*, 64:1–3 (1978), 1–46. The latter has subjected Wang Chung-shu's results to criticism and correction, demonstrating that the city, then the largest walled city in the world, was laid out on a grid system, each unit of which was 500 *pu* (690 m) square. The area of the city may be estimated at 33.5 sq km (8,200 acres). Ch'ang-an comprised 160 wards and 4 palace enclosures of various sizes. See Chapter 2 above, p. 134, Map 4.

49 See Wang Chung-shu, 'Chūgoku kodai tojōsei gairon," in *Nara Heian no miyako to Chōan*, ed. Nishijima Sadao (Tokyo, 1983).

The typical market was a square approximately 367 meters on each side, divided by lanes along which the shops stood. Traders dealing in the same goods were grouped in the same place; by the T'ang period this had resulted in the formation of trade associations called *hang*, but it is uncertain whether these existed in the Han period. In each market was an official building, two stories high and with a flag and a drum on top, which was the headquarters of the officials in charge of the market. Little is known of this system of superintendence as it operated in Ch'ang-an in the Former Han, save that the officials included a market chief (*shih-chang*) and a deputy, but in Lo-yang in the Later Han[50] the staff of the market chief consisted of thirty-six officials of varying designations whose task it was to maintain order and collect the commercial tax. They also fixed the standard price for each commodity on the basis of a monthly review of prices and authorized contracts between buyers and sellers.

Surplus government commodities such as fish from K'un-ming Lake were sold by these officials, and it was they who had to sell goods under Wu-ti's "equal supply" system,[51] thereby incurring accusations of competing with the people for profit. The most important of their functions was the collection of the commercial tax, which went into the lesser treasury, the Shao-fu, rather than into state revenues, and was used for court expenditures. The amount of commercial tax collected in Ch'ang-an is unknown, but that of Lin-tzu during the Former Han period is said to have reached "one thousand pieces of gold or one million copper cash (*ch'ien*)" a year.[52]

All markets during Han operated only under such government control, which thus greatly constricted the economic role of the cities. Government control also extended over the merchants who in this period fell into two main categories, those who sold goods at shops in urban marketplaces and those who traded between cities and with foreign countries. The former, who in general possessed only a small amount of capital, had to be entered in the official register of merchants and pay the commercial tax; the latter, usually much wealthier, did not invariably have to be registered as a merchant. These large-scale operators made vast fortunes by speculative buying and hoarding, often with the collaboration of powerful families and officials. Most of the "Biographies of wealthy men" in the *Shih-chi* and *Han shu* are of men of this type.[53]

Those registered as merchants had very low social status and were fre-

50 For the markets of Lo-yang, see Bielenstein, "Lo-yang," pp. 58–59. 51 See p. 580 below.

52 See *HS* 38, p. 2000. As these suspiciously round figures are quoted as part of special pleading, they should perhaps be interpreted for their rhetorical impact rather than their precise value. Similar reservations should be borne in mind in connection with claims that Lin-tzu had a population of 100,000 households (*SC* 60, p. 2115).

53 See *SC* 129; *HS* 91. Translated in Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 405–64.

quently liable to various penalties. For example, in 97 B.C., in the reign of Wu-ti, when men from the so-called seven categories of criminals were conscripted for a military expedition, the last four categories were classified as registered merchants, those who had once been registered as merchants, those whose parents had been registered as merchants, and those whose grandparents had been registered as merchants.[54] Such restrictions on the status of merchants had existed from the Warring States period onward, for reasons which have already been discussed. At the beginning of the Han period in the reign of Kao-ti (206–195 B.C.), a law was passed forbidding merchants to wear silk clothing or to ride on horseback; they were to pay heavier taxes and their descendants were not permitted to become officials. Although this particular law seems later to have been revised and made somewhat less severe, repression of the merchant class went on. In the reign of Wu-ti (141–87 B.C.) a heavier tax was levied on all merchants, whether registered or not. In addition, registered merchants and their families were not permitted to own land, violation of this rule being punishable by confiscation of land and slaves. These prohibitions and that on merchants becoming officials were repeated in the previously mentioned law restricting land ownership which was promulgated in the reign of Ai-ti (7–1 B.C.).

Paradoxically, the power of the merchants grew even as ever greater efforts were made to repress them. As Ch'ao Ts'o reported to Wen-ti (r. 180–157 B.C.): "At present merchants are rich and honored although they are humbled by the law; farmers are poor and lowly although they are respected by the law."[55] This clearly indicates the ineffectiveness of the government's antimercantile policy, which in effect worsened the very situation it aimed to prevent. This is quite evident from other passages in Ch'ao Ts'o's report:[56]

Nowadays in a farming family of five members at least two of them are required to render labor service. The area of their arable land is no more than one hundred *mou* [11.3 acres]; the yield from which does not exceed 100 *shih* [about 2,000 liters]. Farmers plough in spring, weed in summer, reap in autumn and store in winter; they cut undergrowth and wood for fuel and render labor services to the government. They cannot avoid wind and dust in spring, sultry heat in summer, dampness and rain in autumn and cold and ice in winter. Thus all year round they cannot afford to take even a day's rest. Furthermore they have to welcome guests on their arrival and see them off on their departure; they have to mourn for the dead and inquire after the sick. Besides they have to bring up infants. Although they work as hard as this they still have to bear the calamities of flood and

54 See the comment by Chang Yen (? 3rd or 4th century A.D.) in *HS* 6, p. 205 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 108). 55 *HS* 24A, p. 1133 (Swann, *Food and money*, p. 166).

56 *HS* 24A, p. 1132 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 162ff.). For the textual criticism of this passage, see Katō Shigeshi, *Shiki Heijunsho, Kanjo Shokkashi yakuchū* (Tokyo, 1942), p. 143.

drought. Sometimes taxes are collected quite unexpectedly; if the orders are issued in the morning they must be prepared to pay by the evening. To meet this demand farmers have to sell their possessions at half price, and those who are destitute have to borrow money at two hundred percent interest. Eventually they have to sell fields and dwellings, or sometimes sell even children and grandchildren into slavery in order to pay back the loan. On the other hand great merchants get profits of two hundred percent by hoarding stocks of commodities while the lesser ones sit in rows in the market stalls to buy and sell. They deal in superfluous luxuries and lead an easy life in the cities. Taking advantage of the urgent demands of the government, they sell commodities at a double price. Though they never engage in farming and their women neither tend silkworms nor weave, they always wear embroidered and multicolored clothes and always eat fine millet and meat. Without experiencing the farmers' sufferings, they make vast gains. Taking advantage of their riches, they associate with kings and marquises. Their power exceeds that of the official and they try to surpass each other in using their profits. They wander idly around roaming as far as a thousand *li*: there are so many of them that they form long lines on the roads. They ride in well-built carriages and whip up fat horses, wear shoes of silk and trail white silk [garments]. It is no wonder that merchants take over farmers and farmers become vagrants drifting from one place to another.

This indictment reveals striking contrasts between the lives of farmers and merchants early in Former Han and shows that severe taxation merely impoverished the former and enriched the latter. The merchants who thus took advantage of the government's exploitation of the peasantry often invested their commercial profits in land and became great landowners. This, as Ssu-ma Ch'ien put it, was "to make riches through secondary occupations (i.e., trade) and preserve them by the fundamental occupation (agriculture)."[57] Thus many powerful landowning families also carried on commercial activities.

To obtain wealth by squeezing peasants distressed by their heavy tax burdens was merely the first step toward the accumulation of a fortune. Basic capital once obtained, it was multiplied in a variety of ways. In the "Biographies of wealthy men" in the *Shih-chi*, Ssu-ma Ch'ien marvels at the existence of men who acquired the wealth of lords in a single generation and shows a certain admiration for the means whereby they did it. Often these were enterprises such as the operation of iron mines, slave dealing, speculation, fraud or usury, but Ssu-ma Ch'ien also lists a large variety of commodities by trading in which a man could make an annual profit of 200,000 *ch'ien*, equivalent to the dues which a marquis was entitled to raise from one thousand households.

Such commodities included: liquor, pickles and sauces, hides of cattle, sheep and pigs, grain, boat timber, bamboo poles, light two-wheeled carts,

57 *SC* 129, p. 3281 (Swann, *Food and money*, p. 462).

heavy oxcarts, lacquerware, bronze utensils, wood and iron vessels, dyes, horses, cattle, sheep and swine, slaves, tendons and horns, cinnabar, silk fabrics, fine and coarse cloth, raw lacquer, yeast for fermentation, bean relish, dried fish and abalone, dates, chestnuts, sable and foxskin garments, felt and mats, fruit and vegetables.[58] These commodities came from all over China: bamboo, timber, grain, and gemstones from Shan-hsi (west of Yao-shan); fish, salt, lacquer, and silk from Shan-tung (east of Yao-shan); camphor, catalpa, ginger, cinnamon, gold, tin, lead, cinnabar, rhinoceros horn, tortoise shell, pearls, ivory, and leather from Chiang-nan (south of the Yangtze); and horses, oxen, sheep, rugs, furs, and horns from the north. Copper and iron came from mines in all parts of China.

The commercial activities of these merchants also extended beyond the bounds of the Han empire, and were greatly stimulated when, in the reign of Wu-ti, about 130 B.C., Chang Ch'ien was sent on a mission to the Yüeh-chih in the west. His mission was to open up new routes to Central Asia. Gold and silk were the principal commodities exported from China, and wine, spices, horses, and woollen fabrics were imported from western countries in return. New plants introduced to China along the Central Asian trade routes included grapes, pomegranates, sesame, broad beans, and lucerne. Although the new routes fell into disuse for a time during the transition between the two Han dynasties, they were revived in Later Han when after A.D. 94 the general Pan Ch'ao reestablished a Chinese presence in Central Asia. In A.D. 97 his subordinate, Kan Ying, was even appointed as envoy to Ta-Ch'in (Rome, and more specifically, the Roman Orient), but having reached no farther than An-hsi (Parthia), he was detained by the Parthian merchants who may have acted as middlemen in the silk trade. Silk was so much in demand in Rome at this time that it is said to have been literally worth its weight in gold; the Chinese were called by the Romans the Seres, and the route to their land was known as the Silk Road.[59]

Following Wu-ti's conquest of Nan-yüeh in 111 B.C., southern overseas trade gradually extended to countries in Southeast Asia and the Indian

58 *SC* 129, p. 3274; *HS* 91, p. 3686 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 431f.). The passage gives the volume of trade or quantity of produce required in each case to produce the standard income of 200,000 cash.

59 A number of views have been expressed regarding the actual significance of the silk trade. See Yü Ying-shih, *Trade and expansion in Han China: A study in the structure of Sino-barbarian economic relations* (Berkeley, 1967); Michael Loewe, "Spices and silk: Aspects of world trade in the first seven centuries of the Christian era," *JRAS*, 1971.2, 166–79; A. F. P. Hulsewé, "Quelques considérations sur le commerce de la soie au temps de la dynastie des Han," in *Mélanges de Sinologie offerts à Monsieur P. Demiéville* (Paris, 1974), Vol. II, pp. 117–36; Manfred G. Rashke, "New studies in Roman commerce with the east," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt, Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung* II, 9 (Berlin and New York, 1978), Part 2, pp. 604–1361; and Chapter 6 above.

Ocean which, in exchange for Chinese gold and silks, sent pearls, jade, lapis lazuli, and glass. The growth of commerce along the southern sea routes is illustrated by an episode in A.D. 166 when an enterprising merchant arrived on the coast of China claiming to be an envoy from An-tun, emperor of Ta-ch'in (i.e., Marcus Aurelius Antoninus), and presented Huan-ti with ivory, rhinoceros horn, and tortoise shell.

While the export trade in silk remained under the sponsorship of the Han government, inside China commercial activities continued to meet some measure of government repression, a typical instance being the implementation of Wu-ti's "equal supply" system. This was largely an attempt to restrict the operations of merchants and to channel their profits into the state treasury, but it was only partially successful and aroused much opposition, as is seen from the *Discourses on salt and iron*.[60] Antimercantile policies were continued by Wang Mang; they were not only ineffective, but proved to be one of the causes of his downfall. Owing to a decrease in the circulation of money in Later Han, merchants seemed to have become comparatively less influential. The evidence of Chung-ch'ang T'ung (ca. 180–220) in his *Ch'ang-yen* shows, however, that they were still vigorously pursuing profit throughout the empire and that powerful families were still squeezing the impoverished peasantry by usury and other means.[61]

Manufacturing

In the Spring and Autumn period, as has already been described, some kinds of manufacturing such as making luxury goods or weapons ceased to be the prerogative of certain clans and gradually came to be carried out under the direct auspices of the various states. The general pattern was for craftsmen to work under the direction of a master producing these things for the lords and aristocrats and receiving their food and clothing in return. The occupation of craftsman was hereditary, and his status was ranked below that of the peasants, who were unable to take part in this kind of manufacturing.

In the Warring States period the system was reorganized so that the master of the craftsmen was attached to central or local government offices; hereditary craftsmen were supplemented by the labor of slaves, convicts, and ordinary commoners performing labor service. Such noncommercial production tended to inhibit the growth of any division of labor between agriculture and manufacturing, especially as professional craftsmen were regarded as being socially inferior and farmers were encouraged to produce

60 See *YTL* 1 (*p'ien* 1), p. 4; Gale, *Discourses* (1931), pp. 9–11.   61 See *HHS* 49, pp. 1646f.

their own goods rather than to buy them. Nonetheless, throughout the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods professional manufacturers completely disengaged from agriculture began to emerge, and grew steadily in numbers as commercial activity increased. In a specimen of the domestic budget of a farming family (as calculated by Li K'uei of the state of Wei), the annual cost of clothing is given as 1,500 copper cash (*ch'ien*), showing that clothes might well be purchased rather than made at home.[62] It is also of interest to recall that the earliest followers of the Mohist school are said to have been craftsmen.[63]

The most important manufactures to emerge in the Warring States period were salt and iron. Salt, which is a daily necessity, was found only in a limited number of places and required large enterprises to handle its production and distribution efficiently. Given the large market for farming implements, iron manufacturing too enjoyed conditions conducive to expansion.

Manufacturing in the Han dynasty, as in the preceding era, also fell into the two categories of state-controlled and private enterprises. The former were carried on both at the capital and in the provinces. At the capital they were largely under the control of the lesser treasury (*shao-fu*), the office which had charge of the finances of the imperial court. Its various departments specialized in different kinds of products. That known as the *shang-fang* (office for arts and crafts), for instance, made weapons and bronze vessels and mirrors, examples of which still survive. *Shang-fang* workshops were also established for the same purpose at the courts of the kings and marquises. Another department, the *k'ao-kung-shih* (office for manufactures), made utensils, weapons, and armor similar to those of the *shang-fang*, but of a less expensive kind. The artisans of the eastern garden (*tung-yüan-chiang*) produced funerary objects for the imperial tombs, while the weaving house (*chih-shih*) made textiles and clothing for the court. There had originally been two of these latter offices, of the east and the west, respectively, but the east *chih-shih* was abolished in 28 B.C., the remaining one being known thereafter simply as the *chih-shih*.

Other central ministries involved in manufacturing included the superintendent of agriculture (*ta ssu-nung*), which produced implements at the time when the alternate fields system was being put into operation. A subdivision was responsible for the implementation of Wu-ti's equal supply system and price standardization, and also undertook dyeing. The court architect (*chiang-tso ta-chiang*) had charge of the construction of such things

62 Li K'uei is dated ca. 400 B.C.: see *HS* 24A, p. 1125 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 141–42).
63 Watanabe Takashi, "Bokka no shūdan to sono shisō," *Shigaku zasshi*, 70:10 (1964), 1–34; 70:11 (1964), 40–74.

as palace buildings and imperial tombs, while the superintendent of waterways and parks (*shui-heng tu-wei*) was established in 115 B.C. to administer the famous Shang-lin Park. Two years later, after the minting of coinage in the provinces was prohibited, it was ordered that this work should be carried out exclusively by the so-called Three Shang-lin offices; this would indicate that in the Former Han period it was some subordinate office of the *shui-heng tu-wei* which constituted the Imperial Mint.[64]

There was a variety of state manufacturing agencies in the commanderies and counties. Workshops known as *kung-kuan* were set up in ten commanderies and counties. They usually made weapons for provincial arsenals, but those in Kuang-han commandery and in Ch'eng-tu produced gold, silver, and lacquer vessels instead. Some lacquerware made by these agencies still survives, bearing inscriptions that show their provenance. Agencies that made luxury silk fabrics and brocades for the court (*fu-kuan*; garments office) were established in two places, Lin-tzu in Shantung and Hsiang-i in Ch'en-liu commandery. The three *fu-kuan* workshops in Lin-tzu each employed thousands of workers. The *chin-kuan* (gold office) in Kuei-yang commandery mined gold, while the *t'ung-kuan* (copper office) in Tan-yang commandery was responsible for the mining and casting of copper (apart from minting). The relatively small number of agencies of this latter type shows that with the increasing use of iron at this period, there was less demand for bronze vessels. In Lu-chiang commandery (Anhwei), a shipyard (*lou-ch'uan-kuan*) built warships.[65]

Besides these agencies, in 119 B.C. the government set up agencies for iron and salt manufacture, to implement the state monopoly in those commodities. Iron agencies (*t'ieh-kuan*) were established in forty-eight sites, and salt agencies (*yen-kuan*) in thirty-six, mostly in places where the raw materials were found; apparently "lesser" *t'ieh-kuan* were set up in areas which produced no iron ore in order to reuse scrap iron. The iron foundries were run under direct state control and mainly manufactured agricultural implements. The salt plants, on the other hand, were operated by private salt makers whose products were then sold by the government under a monopoly system. It is probable that the iron and salt agencies were attached to the superintendent of agriculture, whereas the workshops, garments offices, and copper office were under the control of the lesser treasury.[66]

64 For details on these offices, see *HS* 19A, pp. 731–35.

65 Details on these various provincial agencies will be found under the headings of their local administrative units in the "Geographical monograph" of *Han shu;* e.g., see *HS* 28A, p. 1597 for the *kung-kuan* in Kuang-han commandery.

66 For the transfer of the dues raised on salt and iron from the *Shao-fu* to the *Ta ssu-nung*, see Katō Shigeshi, *Shina keizaishi kōshō*, Vol. I, pp. 49–50.

Labor for these government enterprises was drawn from four main sources: state-owned slaves, such as those with expert skills employed in making the new agricultural tools for the alternate fields system; corvée laborers, required to work for the government for one month in the year without pay; convicts, sentenced to hard labor for anything from one to four years; and skilled professional craftsmen having a special social status. The scale of government enterprises is illustrated by the thousands of such craftsmen employed in the textile workshops of Lin-tzu, whose annual wage bill is said to have been several hundred million cash. The wages of the craftsmen in each of the two ***kung-kuan*** which manufactured gold and silver vessels totaled by comparison only 5 million cash a year.[67] If the costs of all state manufacturing agencies were on a similar scale, the annual budget for those attached to the lesser treasury alone must have been vast, probably forming a large proportion of the total annual expenditure of that office. In view of this, it is not surprising that statesmen in the reigns of Yüan-ti (49–33 B.C.) and Ch'eng-ti (33–7 B.C.) demanded the abolition or curtailment of state manufacturing in the interests of economy.

Despite such protests, state-controlled manufacturing survived into Later Han, though with some reorganization and reduction in scale, owing to the fact that some goods were now requisitioned or bought from the common people rather than manufactured. Surviving articles prove that the office for arts and crafts, the weaving house, and the workshops at least continued to perform their previous functions. The iron and salt manufacturing agencies had been abolished along with the monopolies in 44 B.C., only to be restored in 41 and carried on until the end of the reign of Wang Mang (A.D. 9–23). In Later Han they were put under the control of the commanderies and counties rather than that of the superintendent of agriculture, but there was no consistent policy regarding their maintenance or abolition.

In the first half of Former Han the most powerful private manufacturers were those engaged in iron production, and it is they who are the first to be mentioned in the "Biographies of wealthy men" in the *Shih-chi*. It is interesting to note that these iron manufacturers, like the Cho and Ch'eng families of Shu, the K'ung clan of Wan, and the Ts'ao-ping family of Lu, had ancestors who in the Warring States period had been flourishing iron manufacturers in the northeast.[68] After the Ch'in conquest these men had been forcibly removed to Shu (Szechwan) and Wan (Honan), where they again began to practice their trade; this illustrates clearly how the iron

67 These figures need to be treated with caution, as they derive from a polemical submission on the subject of economic policy put forward by Kung Yü about 48 B.C. See *HS* 72, p. 3070.

68 See *SC* 129, pp. 3277f.; *HS* 91, p. 3690 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 452f.).

industry, hitherto concentrated in the northeast, came to spread to other regions during the Han period.

Another large-scale private industry in the early part of Former Han was salt production. In China salt was derived from four main sources: sea salt, especially that produced on the north coast of the Shantung peninsula and south of the mouth of the Yangtze; lake salt, from a salt lake in the south of present Shansi province; rock salt, from the deserts on the northern borders; and well salt, extracted from the brine wells in Shu. As the raw materials were found only in limited areas, it was easy for entrepreneurs to monopolize them and make great profits. At the beginning of the Han dynasty a relative of the emperor, Liu Pi, king of Wu, accumulated wealth from the salt industry sufficient to rival that of the imperial court.[69]

To obtain the raw materials and also the fuel necessary to process them, it was essential to employ a very large labor force; one family is said to have used over a thousand refugees for this purpose. Such people, according to the *Discourses on salt and iron*, were not always directly subject to the authority of the state.[70] Iron and salt manufacturers also traded in their products and invested the profits in land, thus becoming great landowners with control over large numbers of peasants. The creation of state monopolies on salt and iron in the reign of Wu-ti was a direct reaction to these circumstances. The state aimed by this method not only to channel the profits from the two largest and most profitable industries into its own treasuries, but also to prevent the peasantry from abandoning their basic occupation of agriculture and the salt and iron merchants from developing into powerful families with many peasant dependents opposed to the interests of the authorities.

The new policy did not in fact cause the immediate decline of the private salt and iron manufacturers, as most of them were simply employed in the new salt and iron agencies; Sang Hung-yang, the chief promoter of the whole concept of monopolies, was himself of merchant origins. Nonetheless, their former profits were now largely absorbed by the state and they lost their independence. The monopolies went on after the reign of Wu-ti despite opposition such as that recorded in the *Discourses on salt and iron* and may have been responsible for the eventual decline of former millionaire entrepreneur families such as the K'ung of Wan and the Ch'eng of Shu. The monopolies were temporarily suspended from 44 to 41 B.C., and in Later Han much salt and iron manufacturing reverted to private enterprise. Later Han, however, so far as we know, produced no industrial millionaires to rival those of the early Former Han.

69 See *SC* 106, p. 2822. 70 See *YTL* 1 (*p'ien* 6), p. 42 (Gale, *Discourses* [1931], p. 35).

While there is practically no information in the sources on private manufacturing other than the iron and salt industries, it may be conjectured that there was a flourishing trade in the kind of manufactured items listed in the *Shih-chi* "Biographies of wealthy men." Among these trades, brewing was evidently very profitable and carried out on a large scale. In 98 B.C. Wu-ti enacted a liquor monopoly to control it, but brewing was inherently almost impossible to control and this policy did not survive the controversies about the government monopolies of 81 B.C. Another very important private manufacture was textiles. The wife of Chang An-shih, a high official in the reign of Hsüan-ti (r. 74–49 B.C.), is said to have employed seven hundred skilled domestic slaves in spinning,[71] while the silk fabrics of Ch'i were used all over the empire for robes, caps, girdles, and shoes. When Wu-ti's "equal supply system" was first enacted, several million bolts of cloth were apparently collected at the capital as a result, showing perhaps that great quantities of privately manufactured textiles were in circulation in the cities.

Despite this, and although Li K'uei's specimen budget shows clothing already to have been an item of purchase in the Warring States period, it should not be concluded that textile manufacture and agriculture were already completely separated from each other and that all farmers bought their clothes without ever making cloth for themselves. Strong evidence to the contrary is provided by the tax system of the Three Kingdoms, which required peasants to pay part of their tax in hemp and silk, and by the tax system (*tsu-yung-tiao*) of early T'ang. Both systems were based on the presupposition that agriculture and textile manufacturing were by their very nature inseparable, the production of fibers and textiles being the occupation of the women of farm families.[72]

Changes in the monetary system[73]

A monetary system, on which the development of cities, commerce, and manufacturing to a great extent depended, began in the Warring States period with the minting of coins of various shapes, sizes, and weights in the different states. Some were minted by the rulers of the states and others by merchants in the cities. A uniform coinage minted by the government came into existence only after the Ch'in conquest, when the emperor ordered the

71 See *HS* 59, p. 2652 (Wilbur, *Slavery in China*, p. 365).

72 On the complex question of self-sufficiency in clothing of rural households in Han times, see Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp. 70f.

73 For the changes introduced in the coinage see Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 377f. and the tabulation on pp. 382–3; and Lien-sheng Yang, *Money and credit in China: A short history* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), pp. 20f.

production of the so-called *pan-liang* (half-*liang*) coins. These were round bronze coins with a square hole in the middle, each, as the name implied, weighing 12 *shu* or half a *liang* (7.5 g); the words *pan-liang* were cast on the surface. The typical Chinese coin was henceforth to be of this shape.

At the beginning of the Han dynasty, Kao-ti abolished government minting and legalized private minting, probably because the turmoil at the end of Ch'in had resulted in a great shortage of coins which had to be made up quickly in order to facilitate the circulation of goods. A very large number of coins was subsequently minted, but they were so diminished in size and weight as to be known by the name of "elm-seed" coins. Though they were the same shape as the *pan-liang* coin and bore the words *pan-liang*, they weighed only about 1.5 grams (or even as little as 0.2), in contrast with the 7.5 grams of the former coin.

The Han government first carried out its own minting in 186 B.C., during the reign of Empress Lü, and at the same time apparently prohibited private minting. The new coin, though still called a *pan-liang*, actually weighed 8 *shu* (5.7 g). Four years later this denomination was abandoned in favor of the *wu-fen* coin, which weighed 2 *shu* and 4 *lei* (1.5 g.), that is, one-fifth of a proper *pan-liang* coin (7.5 g.) and less than one third of the previous *pan-liang* coin of 8 *shu*. The *wu-fen* coin was thus almost as small as the elm-seed coin, showing that the latter was still being privately minted and that the government had to conform to it. The widespread circulation of such lightweight coins caused an inflation which lasted until the reign of Wen-ti (180–157 B.C.).

In 175 B.C. private minting was permitted again, but with certain restrictions. Though still called a *pan-liang*, the weight of the coin was now to be 4 *shu* or one-sixth of a *liang* (2.6 g), and it was to be made of copper and tin. Adulterating the alloy with lead or iron or altering the weight was severely punished by law in the hope that this would check the circulation of lightweight coins. There are several records of private minting, which was carried on simultaneously with that of the government. In the reigns of Wen-ti and Ching-ti (157–141 B.C.), the aforementioned Liu Pi, king of Wu, added to his already considerable wealth by mining copper and minting coins, and Teng T'ung, a favorite of Wen-ti, did the same thing when given copper mines at Yen-tao in Shu.[74] The 4 *shu* coin was standard for the next fifty years or so, until the reign of Wu-ti (141–87 B.C.). Meanwhile in 144 B.C. minting again became a government monopoly; coining became a crime that was subject to the death penalty.

74 For Liu Pi see p. 584 above; and *SC* 106, p. 2822. For Teng T'ung, see *SC* 125, p. 3192. The two men are paired together in *SC* 30, p. 1419; and *HS* 24B, p. 1157 (Swann, *Food and money*, p. 240).

Throughout these years there had been a great increase in forgery, aggravated by the great discrepancy between the face value and the actual weight of the coinage. It became common practice to clip the edges of coins and make counterfeit money with the metal thus obtained. In 120 B.C. the 4 *shu* (2.6 g) coin was therefore abolished and replaced with one which weighed 3 *shu* (1.9 g) and which moreover was inscribed with its actual weight rather than the fictitious *pan-liang*, which now ceased to exist.[75] At the same time new coins of high denominations were introduced. One was a note, made of white deerskin with embroidered fringes, which was given a value of 400,000 copper coins (*ch'ien*), though it was in fact simply token money used in gathering revenues.[76] The other three were made of an alloy of silver and tin and were worth 3,000, 500, and 300 *ch'ien*, respectively, though all weighed less than 8 *liang* (120 g). Counterfeiting of any of these new coins was subject to the death penalty. The law, however, proved ineffective, even though rigorously applied.

One year later, therefore, the 3 *shu* coin was in its turn abolished and replaced by the *wu-shu* or 5 *shu* (3.25 g) coin, the weight of which again corresponded to the face value. This was to be the basic Chinese coin until the beginning of the T'ang dynasty. In the Han period it was at first minted by both the central government and the authorities of the commanderies, and it was cast with a raised edge to prevent clipping. Unfortunately the *wu-shu* coins produced in the commanderies were inferior and of light weight, and forgery of both these and the silver coins continued unabated. To try and cope with this situation, the government minted at the capital a coin with a red rim which was officially worth five *wu-shu* coins.[77] This was used compulsorily in tax payments, but was much abused in private commerce. It was therefore soon abolished, along with the greatly debased silver coins.

As a result of all this, in 113 B.C. minting was made the monopoly of the three Shang-lin offices attached to the superintendent of waterways and parks who, together with the lesser treasury, *shao-fu*, was in charge of the finances of the imperial court. These three offices now constituted the sole Imperial Mint and were responsible for the selection and transportation of

75 For a discussion of the dating of this decision see Katō Shigeshi, "Sanshusen chūzō-nen bunkō," in his *Shina keizaishi kōshō*, Vol. I, pp. 195–207.

76 For references to the use of deerskin, see *SC* 30, p. 1426 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. III, pp. 564f.); *HS* 6, p. 178 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 64); *HS* 24B, p. 1163 (Swann, *Food and money*, p. 268); and Yang, *Money and credit*, p. 51. The latter takes the view that "The white deerskin was never intended for circulation, and consequently cannot be considered as money."

77 *SC* 30, p. 1434 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. III, p. 584); *HS* 24B, p. 1169 (Swann, *Food and money*, p. 291). Ju Shun (fl. 221–265) explained that the rim was made with red copper. Both *Shih-chi* and *Han shu* add that within two years the secret of manufacture was generally known, but Ju Shun states that it was unknown to him.

copper ores as well as for the actual minting. All coins minted by the commandery authorities were returned to the central government to be melted down and reminted. The coins produced by the new mint were so good that forgery became difficult and unprofitable for counterfeiters who lacked good facilities.

In this way, minting and the profits derived from it came to be the exclusive prerogative of the imperial court. The minting system remained stable from 113 B.C. until the end of Former Han. The total number of *wu-shu* coins minted between 118 B.C. and about A.D. 1 to 5 was over 28,000,000,000, giving a yearly average of around 220,000,000 or 220,000 strings of 1000 coins. This is only a slightly smaller total than the number of cash minted at the height of the T'ang period (327,000 strings a year in the T'ien-pao era, A.D. 742–755), though much smaller than the equivalent figures for the Sung (e.g., 3,000,000 strings in 1045 and 5,860,000 in 1080).[78] To find such large numbers of coins minted in the first century B.C. is surprising and makes one realize how greatly the development of commerce and manufacturing must have been affected by it.

As in other matters, so in coinage Wang Mang sought to show that he was following ancient precedent and reviving the models of an ideal past, and adduced ideological reasons to support the drastic changes he attempted in the entire monetary system of Former Han.[79] In A.D. 7 he had three new coins circulated in addition to the *wu-shu* coins – namely, large coins (*ta-ch'ien*) weighing 12 *shu* (7.6 g.), knife coins, and inlaid knife coins with a gold inscription, worth 50, 500, and 5,000 *wu-shu*, respectively. In A.D. 9, the year after his enthronement, he abolished all these denominations apart from the *ta-ch'ien* and instituted a new and vastly more complicated system. In addition to the use of gold, silver, tortoise shell, and cowries as currency, there were two different types of bronze coinage, *ch'ien* and *pu*. The *ch'ien* were made in five denominations ranging from *hsiao-ch'ien* (little coins) weighing 1 *shu* to *chuang-ch'ien* (adult coins) of 9 *shu*, which were to be used along with the previous *ta-ch'ien*. The *pu* was a spade-shaped coin.[80] There were ten denominations of *pu* of graded sizes and weights.

For this complex, multidenominational currency of twenty-eight units,

78 For the figues of coin cast in the Han, see *HS* 24B, p. 1177 (Swann, *Food and money*, p. 324). For production of coin in T'ang times, see *T'ung-tien* 9, p. 53c; D. C. Twitchett, *Financial administration under the T'ang dynasty*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1970), p. 78. On the Sung, see P'eng Hsin-wei, *Chung-kuo huo-pi shih* (Shanghai, 1958), p. 300.

79 For Wang Mang's monetary reforms see Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 482f. and 506f.

80 The term *pu* literally means "cloth money," but it is used to allude to the spade-shaped coins (also called *pu*) that had been used in parts of China during the pre-imperial period. See P'eng Hsin-wei, *Chung-kuo huo-pi shih*; and Wang Yü-ch'üan, *Wo kuo ku-tai huo-pi ti ch'i-yüan ho fa-chan* (Peking, 1957).

historical precedents were cited, whether correctly or not; the only factor in common was a general discrepancy between face value and actual weight. The system proved totally impractical and was gradually abandoned, the only survivors being the "small coins," *hsiao-ch'ien*, and the *ta-ch'ien* (the latter worth fifty times the former). In A.D. 14 these in their turn were replaced by two new coins, the *huo-ch'üan* (a circular bronze coin with a hole, weighing 5 *shu*, 3.25 g) and the *huo-pu;* the latter weighed only five times as much as the former, but its value was officially twenty-five times greater.

The penalties for violations of the new system were severe. Forgery was subject to capital punishment, and those found guilty of possessing coins which were not currently legal tender or even of criticizing the new currency were to be exiled. Violations were endless, however, and it was subsequently ordained that transgressors should merely be enslaved by the government or sentenced to hard labor. On the principle of collective responsibility, the neighbors of the offender were to share the same punishment. The confusion, distress, and loss of confidence engendered by these rapid and drastic changes certainly contributed in no small way to Wang Mang's downfall.

Even after the end of Wang Mang's regime, the monetary system remained in considerable disorder, hemp, silk, and grain being used as money along with the existing coinage. In Szechwan iron coins were for a while minted by Kung-sun Shu, who founded a short-lived kingdom there (A.D. 24–26).[81] Order was restored only some time after the reunification when, in A.D. 40, the Later Han government decided to revive the *wu-shu* coins of the Former Han period. This had first been advocated by Ma Yüan, one of Kuang-wu-ti's generals, but was delayed on account of opposition from the chief ministers. Unease and uncertainty over the social effects of minting coins clearly persisted. But Ma Yüan's suggestion proved a good one, and *wu-shu* coins continued to be minted until the end of the dynasty. All minting was now controlled by the superintendent of agriculture rather than by the agencies in charge of the finances of the imperial court.

Gold is frequently mentioned in the Han period, but it was never used as currency except under Wang Mang. However, it was often used as a unit for the purposes of valuation. The basic unit of gold was the *chin* (16 *liang* or 384 *shu*; 245 g), which was nominally worth 10,000 *ch'ien* of copper coins. Valuable possessions were frequently reckoned in those units; for example, in Former Han the property of a well-to-do family was said to be

81 See *HHS* 13, p. 537.

worth ten *chin*, or 100,000 *ch'ien*. Though gold was given by the emperor as gifts to favorites and high officials, it was used for jewelery and as a means for conserving wealth, rather than for purposes of economic exchange.[82] In the Later Han silver took the place of gold in high-value transactions, and seems to have been issued by the government in standard sized ingots.

In Han the price of goods was always indicated in terms of money and so, for the purposes of taxation, were the values of land, houses, carts, horses, and so on. Thus there existed a price structure determining the relative values of various commodities. This is clear from the list of goods in the *Shih-chi* "Biographies of wealthy men," which shows the amount of each commodity that had to be sold in order to gain a specified profit.[83] A further indication of comparative values may be seen in fragments of what were probably assessments of property drawn up for tax purposes.[84]

The price structure varied not only according to differences in time and place, but also according to the changes in the monetary system and fluctuations in supply and demand caused by wars and famine or glut. This was particularly the case with daily necessities like grain. One *shih* (20 liters) cost as much as one million *ch'ien* in the chaotic period after the end of the Ch'in empire, but fell to around 10 *ch'ien* in the peaceful reign of Wen-ti (180–157 B.C.) and to 5 *ch'ien* in the reign of Hsüan-ti (74–49 B.C.), when there were good harvests. Famine in the following reign of Yüan-ti (49–33 B.C.) pushed the price up ro 500 *ch'ien*. There were also great price differences between the central and the outer commanderies. The cost of a slave varied between about 12,000 and 20,000 *ch'ien*, depending on age, sex, and skills, but this fell sharply after the promulgation in the reign of Ai-ti (7–1 B.C.) of the law restricting land and slave ownership. It is therefore difficult to indicate the normal prices of commodities during the Han period. But from the previously mentioned list in the *Shih-chi*, one can conjecture that the average cost of one *shih* of grain in the early part of Former Han was around 120 *ch'ien*. In the second half of Former Han it seems to have been approximately 100 *ch'ien*, and remained the same in the early years of Later Han.[85]

82 A number of complex problems arise in connection with gold – for example the sources of supply, the extent of its distribution, and possible repercussions with the Mediterranean world. See W. W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1951), pp. 104f.; Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 510f.; A. F. P. Hulsewé, *China in Central Asia: The early stage 125 B.C.–A.D. 23, with an introduction by M. A. N. Loewe* (Leiden, 1979), pp. 134 note 333, and 218 note 814; and Rashke, "New studies in Roman commerce," pp. 624–25, 725 (note 305).

83 *SC* 129, p. 3274; *HS* 91, p. 3687 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 434f.).

84 See Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, pp. 71–72.

85 Satō Taketoshi, "Zen-Kan no kokka," *Jinbun kenkyū*, 18:3 (1967), 22–38; Nunome Chōfū, "Hansen hankoku ron," *Ritsumeikan bungaku*, 148 (1967), 633–53.

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

Government and imperial court finance

No account of social and economic developments during the Han dynasty is possible without reference to the workings of the state authority which, through the implementation of its various financial policies, exercised great influence in agriculture, commerce, and manufacturing. In spite of the fact that in a centralized despotism with the emperor as the highest authority all revenues should in theory belong to him, in the Han period there was a sharp division in financial administration into the two spheres of government or public finance and the private finances of the imperial court. In Former Han these were controlled by two separate ministries with independent resources and expenditures – that is, the superintendents of agriculture and the lesser treasury.[86]

The chief office for government finance was the ministry of agriculture (*ta ssu-nung*).[87] Its main sources of revenue were the various taxes imposed on the people and, after 119 B.C., the profits of the salt and iron monopolies and the "equal supply" and "price standardization" schemes. It also received the proceeds from state-owned lands and from the sale of aristocratic ranks carried on in the reign of Wu-ti (141–87 B.C.). Its principal expenditures were on the salaries of officials at the capital, public works (such as the construction of imperial tombs, and flood control and irrigation projects), and military expenses (army supplies, the costs of large-scale expeditions, and rewards to the troops). Besides these major items, it was also responsible for the costs of state festivals and rituals.

The revenues of the lesser treasury (*shao-fu*) were derived in the first instance from the tax on registered merchants and taxes on the various natural products of the mountains, forests, rivers, seas, lakes, and marshes (all nature being considered a possession of the emperor). This in practice meant taxes on fish and timber, and the proceeds from all the produce of the huge imperial parks. An exception to this was the profit from the monopoly on salt and iron, the two most valuable natural products of the time, which went to the superintendent of agriculture. This was the result of a special gesture on the part of Wu-ti in an effort to improve state finances. Before the inauguration of the monopolies, taxes on salt and iron production must have gone to the lesser treasury. The loss of revenue from

86 For a full study of the division of responsibilities, see Katō Shigeshi, *Shina keizaishi kōshō*, Vol. I, pp. 35–156.

87 This had originally been called *Chih-su nei-shih* following the Ch'in system, but in 143 B.C. was renamed *ta nung-ling*, and in 104 B.C. the name was again changed, to *Ta ssu-nung*.

that source was made up a few years later, in 113 B.C., when minting (as has already been explained) was made a government monopoly run by the lesser treasury's new coordinate ministry, that of the superintendent of waterways and parks (*shui-heng tu-wei*).

Another source of revenue for the lesser treasury was the *k'ou-fu* or poll tax on minors, levied on all children between the ages of three and fourteen (later between seven and fourteen). The amount was originally 20 *ch'ien* but was later changed to 23 *ch'ien*, of which 20 went to the lesser treasury and the other 3 were used for military expenses. The reason why all this money did not reach the superintendent of agriculture is unknown. The *k'ou-fu* was a sizable item in the revenues of the imperial court, as can be shown from the following estimates.

Taking the census figure of A.D. 2 of 59,594,978 for the entire registered population, and assuming that one-fifth of these individuals were between seven and fourteen and liable to pay *k'ou-fu*, at 20 *ch'ien* per person, the total amount collected would have been 240 million *ch'ien* annually. In the reign of Wu-ti, assuming the population to have been around 50 million and one third of these between the ages of three and fourteen, at 23 *ch'ien* a head the total sum collected would have been 380 million *ch'ien*.[88] The lesser treasury also received the profits from the state land assigned to it. The exact amount is unknown, but some idea may be gained from the fact that in the reign of Wu-ti 5000 *ch'ing* (57,000 acres) of newly irrigated land in Ho-tung commandery, which was expected to yield over 40 million liters of grain a year for state revenue, was allocated to the lesser treasury. Though the irrigation project was never fully realized, the income must have been considerable.[89]

In addition, the annual offering of gold from the kings and marquises also went to the lesser treasury. The donors were required to present this at the festival held in the eighth month during which liquor brewed in this same month was offered at the shrine of the imperial ancestors. The gold, which was nominally to subsidize the festival, was exacted in proportion to the population of their fiefs at the rate of 4 *liang* (60 g) per thousand, and was examined for quality. If it was defective, the contributors stood to lose the whole or part of their fiefs. In 112 B.C., during the reign of Wu-ti,

88 This calculation is based on the figures that are given for the registered population in *HS* 28B, p. 1640. The figure for individuals amounts to 57,671,400 if it is based on the counts given for each of the administrative units of the empire; see Hans Bielenstein, "The census of China during the period 2–742 A.D.," p. 158. In addition, it is possible that some allowance should be made for a growth of the population that took place between the reign of Wu-ti and A.D. 2; this has been estimated by one scholar at 1 percent per year (see Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp. 15f.). If that estimate is accepted, it would imply that the registered population numbered around 30 million during the reign of Wu-ti. 89 *HS* 29, p. 1680.

106 marquises were actually deprived of their honors and demoted to commoner status for having presented inferior gold. One can only make an approximate estimate of the amount of gold presented on these occasions. As the total population of the kingly fiefs, according to the census of A.D. 2, was over 6.38 million, they must in this year have given some 380 kilograms of gold, equivalent to about 16 million *ch'ien*. The total sum, including the offerings of the marquises, must have been much greater.[90]

Although the lesser treasury's revenues were large, its expenditures were enormous, covering the entire cost of running the court. These included expenses for food, clothing, furniture, and utensils; medicine; musicians and dancers; and the imperial harem (for each of which a special division of the lesser treasury bore responsibility), not to mention the living expenses of courtiers and other luxury items. Articles such as clothing, utensils, and vehicles were mostly produced by the state manufacturing agencies maintained by the same office. Their cost was so exorbitant that in national emergencies public-spirited statesmen frequently demanded cutbacks, as did Kung Yü in the reign of Yüan-ti (49–33 B.C.).

The lesser treasury also had to provide the rewards and presents which the emperor bestowed regularly, and on special occasions, upon kings, marquises, high officials, favorites, and individuals of special merit. These gifts were made in gold or bronze coin or in both, often as much as one hundred *chin* (25 kg) of gold and a million copper coins *ch'ien* being given in a single bestowal. Early in the reign of Hsüan-ti (74–49 B.C.), for instance, Huo Kuang received the huge reward of a fief of 17,000 households, 7,000 *chin* (1,050 kg) of gold, 60 million copper coins, 30,000 bolts of silk, 170 slaves, 2,000 horses, and a mansion.[91] Moreover, in national emergencies the lesser treasury would occasionally make grants to the superintendent of agriculture. Besides all this, it had to meet the costs of minting and the stipends and office expenses of its own staff, and that of the superintendent of waterways and parks, which employed very large numbers of slaves. (According to Kung Yü, the slaves in government employ numbered over 100,000 in all and cost from 500 to 600 million *ch'ien* a year to maintain.)[92]

From all this it is clear that the finances of the Han empire were on a vast scale. According to the *Hsin-lun* of Huan T'an (43 B.C.–A.D. 28), the Former Han government took in more than 4,000 million *ch'ien* a year in taxes from the people, half of which was spent on official stipends. The other half was saved for emergencies. The total revenue of the lesser trea-

90 For this incident, see Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 126f., and Chapter 2 above, pp. 158f.
91 *HS* 68, p. 2947. 92 *HS* 72, p. 3076 (Wilbur, *Slavery in China*, pp. 174f., 397f.).

sury he estimates at 1,300 million *ch'ien*.[93] The *Han shu* records that the financial reserves in the reign of Yüan-ti (49–33 B.C.) were as follows: 4,000 million in the care of the superintendent of agriculture, 2,500 million in the that of the superintendent of waterways and parks, and 1,800 million in the lesser treasury.[94] All these vast sums had to be accounted for in minute detail by the relevant government offices.

The items which made up these revenues and expenditures included grain, hemp, silk, gold and, most important, copper coins, in which totals were always indicated. Though stipends of officials in this period were usually measured in units of grain, a high proportion of all taxes was paid in money; there was thus created a monetary circulation of several thousand million coins a year, centering on the financial operations of the government. Since taxpayers had to sell their produce to get coin, this gave merchants great opportunities for profit-making.

It is probable that in the Ch'in dynasty, when the people's taxes were paid into the lesser treasury, court finances were on a larger scale than those of the government, but throughout Former Han government finances were gradually but steadily enlarged until they came to rival those of the court in scale. Early in Later Han great changes were made by Kuang-wu-ti (r. A.D. 25–57), who turned all the revenues of the lesser treasury over to the superintendent of agriculture; after A.D. 40 the office of *Shui-heng tu-wei* was abolished and minting also became the prerogative of the superintendent of agriculture. The lesser treasury now became merely an administrative office with miscellaneous functions connected with the court, and was increasingly staffed by eunuchs. With the minor exception of the salt and iron agencies (now transferred to the control of the commanderies and counties), the superintendent of agriculture was now the only central financial organ of the state.

Money nevertheless continued to be of great importance in the economy of the Later Han, and a list of official stipends for the year A.D. 50 given in the *Hou-Han shu* shows that they were now paid half in money and half in grain.[95] Gradually, however, the monetary economy began to decline. Although taxes were still largely payable in money, the state obtained less and less hard cash because of the decrease in the number of peasant tax-

93 This fragment of Huan T'an's work is preserved in the *T'ai-p'ing yü-lan*; see Timoteus Pokora, *Hsin-lun (New treatise) and other writings by Huan T'an (43 B.C.–28 A.D.)* (Ann Arbor, 1975), pp. 49, and 59 note 21. The original reading of 8,300 million is believed to be an error for 1,300 million, which emendment is accepted here. 94 See *HS* 86, p. 3494.

95 *HHS* (tr.) 28, pp. 3632–33. This point has been disputed; Utsunomiya Kiyoyoshi, *Kandai shakai keizaishi kenkyū*, pp. 203f., 209f., contends that stipends were actually paid 70 percent in cash and 30 percent in grain. His argument has, however, been refuted by Lien-sheng Yang, "Numbers and units in Chinese economic history," *HJAS*, 12 (1949), 216–225; and by Nunome Chōfū, "Hansen hankoku ron." See also Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 125f.

payers as more and more small farmers came under the control of powerful local landowners. In a final effort to make up these losses in revenues, in the reigns of Huan-ti (A.D. 146–168) and Ling-ti (A.D. 168–189) the government imposed an extra tax of 10 *ch'ien* per *mou* (0.046 hectare; 0.113 acre) on all land and also sold ranks and official positions. Ling-ti stored the money so obtained in the so-called Hall of Ten Thousand Gold Pieces (*Wan-chin T'ang*) in the Western Garden; this action completely disregarded the fact that separate court finances had long been a thing of the past and were not to be restored by the arbitrary actions of a despot.

The taxation system

Taxes during Han were in general of two kinds, *tsu* and *fu*, the distinction between them having originated in the Spring and Autumn period. The *tsu* was originally tribute which the people offered to the ruler for the rites and festivals of his ancestral shrines. It was also called *shui*, implying the separation of a part of the people's produce for the ruler. The *fu* at first meant an obligation to render military service, which was later commuted into the payment of certain goods. Hence it became customary to appropriate *tsu* for the emperor's personal and court expenditures and *fu* for military expenses, which is why during Han many taxes paid to the lesser treasury were called *tsu* and those paid to the superintendent of agriculture were often *fu*. In the Han period, however, the land tax or *t'ien-tsu* formed a part of state revenues, while the poll tax on minors or *k'ou-fu* was paid to the lesser treasury; the old distinctions were no longer strictly maintained.

However, some of the *tsu* did form part of the revenues of the court. These were the tax on registered merchants (*shih-tsu*), the tax on the profits of sea fishing (*hai-tsu*), and all those taxes levied on natural products and on commercial and industrial profits. Among the *fu* were the poll tax on adults (*suan-fu*), the property tax which was included in it (*suan-tzu*), and the *keng-fu*, which was originally paid in lieu of labor service. These, apart from the *k'ou-fu*, formed part of the state revenues. In addition to these taxes, there were the obligations for labor and military service. The taxes may be classified into taxes on profits (such as the land and commercial taxes), poll taxes (the *suan-fu, k'ou-fu,* and *keng-fu* and labor services) and property taxes (like the *suan-tzu* and others which will be discussed later).

It has already been remarked that the aim of the Han government was to exercise control over individual peasants (rather than simply the family unit) through taxation and labor service. This aim can be seen most clearly in the operation of the various poll taxes and labor services that were imposed universally. For this purpose family registers were made; on these

TABLE 15

Registered population, A.D. 2 *to* A.D. 146

Period	Year	Households	Individuals
Former Han	2	12,366,470	57,671,400
Later Han	57	4,279,634	21,007,820
	75	5,860,573	34,125,021
	88	7,456,784	43,356,367
	105	9,237,112	53,256,229
	125	9,647,838	48,690,789
	136–141	10,780,000	53,869,588
	140	9,455,609	48 million
	144	9,946,919	49,730,550
	145	9,937,680	49,524,183
	146	9,348,227	47,566,772

were based the annual censuses in which every resident of a county was entered. These Han censuses are considered to be relatively accurate compared to those of later dynasties, which are full of omissions and other faults.[96] From the figures in Table 15, taken from the existing census counts, it appears that there was a great decline in the total number of registered households at the beginning of Later Han, largely due to the confusion and unrest which followed Wang Mang's rule. In this administrative confusion many households were able to escape the notice of the authorities. The decline in figures does not mean a sharp decline of population, but rather a slackening of administrative control. These lists show the actual numbers of individuals on whom the state could lay hands and who were subject to taxation and labor service.[97]

The land tax or *t'ien-tsu* was levied on actual crop yields, the rate being fixed in circa 205 B.C. at one-fifteenth part of the yield.[98] This rate may possibly have been raised later, but it was restored to one-fifteenth on the accession of Hui-ti in 195 B.C. In 168 B.C. half the tax was remitted, and in the following year it was remitted entirely, the remission lasting apparently for the next eleven years. During this period noble ranks were

96 They do not, nevertheless, give a complete enumeration of the population. Many households certainly evaded enumeration, particularly in the more loosely administered southern parts of the empire. For detailed criticism of the Han census, see the studies of Hans Bielenstein and Lao Kan cited in note 43 above.

97 The sources for the population figures for the years A.D. 2 and A.D. 140 shown in the table above are *HS* 28B, p. 1640 and *HHS* (tr.) 23, p. 3533 respectively. Figures for the other years are taken from notes to *HHS* (tr.) 23, p. 3534. These draw on a variety of sources, which are not always specified. The figures for A.D. 2 and A.D. 140 have been corrected on the basis of Bielenstein, "Census," pp. 158–59.

98 See *HS* 24A, p. 1127 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 149f.).

TABLE 16

Registered arable land, A.D. *2 to* A.D. *146*

Period	Year	Arable area*
Former Han	2	8,270,536
Later Han	105	7,320,170
	125	6,942,892
	144	6,896,271
	145	6,957,676
	146	6,930,123

*In *ch'ing*; 1 *ch'ing* = approximately 11.39 acres.

bestowed on those who presented grain to the throne, at the suggestion of the statesman Ch'ao Ts'o (executed 154 B.C.). In 156 B.C. the land tax was restored at the rate of one-thirtieth, which thereafter remained the standard rate. It seems that in addition to the land tax, hay was also demanded as fodder for state-owned cattle, but nothing further is known of this.[99] In the Later Han period, owing to great military expenditures, the land tax was at first levied at the rate of one-tenth, but in A.D. 30, after the situation had been somewhat stabilized, the rate was restored to one-thirtieth, at which it remained for the rest of the Han dynasty.[100]

Although the land tax might officially have been one-thirtieth of the crop, it is clear, in the words of one of the protagonists in the *Discourses on salt and iron*, that it was "actually levied on the basis of the area" of the fields owned.[101] Presumably the amount of tax on a certain area of land was fixed on the basis of its fertility and average yield, which would have necessitated some kind of land survey. Such surveys are not recorded before the very end of Former Han. After the restoration in A.D. 39, Kuang-wu-ti once again ordered a survey of land throughout the empire. Successive surveys in the Later Han provide the figures in Table 16 showing the amounts of land which the government could hope to tax at different times.[102]

Even if it was levied on the area of arable land, land tax at the rate of one-thirtieth of the crop was considered very lenient; furthermore, toward the end of Later Han the rate actually dropped as low as one one-hundreth. In practice this was not as favorable to the peasants as it seems, for it did not by any means represent the whole of their tax burden: as land tax

99 *HHS* 1A, p. 5; see the quotation from *Tung-kuan Han chi* in note 4; and *HHS* (tr.) 7, p. 3170.
100 *HHS* 1B, p. 50. 101 *YTL* 3 (*p'ien* 15), p. 196 (Gale, *Discourses* [1931], p. 94).
102 Sources: *HHS* 1B, p. 65; the figures for arable land are given in *HS* 28B, p. 1640 and in the notes to *HHS* (tr.) 23, p. 3534 with meticulous precision.

declined, poll taxes and property taxes increased. In any case, low land taxes would benefit only farmers working their own land and the great landowners and not their tenants, who had to pay rents amounting to as much as half their crop (as was pointed out by both Tung Chung-shu and Wang Mang.)[103] Consequently, tax remissions granted on account of natural disasters were rarely passed on to poor tenants.

The *suan-fu* or *k'ou-suan* was a poll tax levied on all men and women between the ages of fifteen and fifty-six; it may have originated in the Warring States period and certainly existed in the Ch'in dynasty. The rate fixed at the beginning of Former Han was 1 *suan* (120 *ch'ien*) per person, which remained fairly stable. In 189 B.C., in an effort to increase the population, all unmarried women between the ages of fifteen and thirty were required to pay up to 5 *suan* (600 *ch'ien*), but this was reduced to 40 *ch'ien* in the following reign. In 140 B.C. an exemption of 2 *suan* (240 *ch'ien*) was granted to families which included persons over the age of eighty. The *suan* was reduced to 90 *ch'ien* in 52 B.C., and in 31 B.C. it was further reduced to 80 *ch'ien*. In Later Han, in A.D. 85, a three-year exemption from the poll tax was given to women on the birth of a child, and one year's exemption to men whose wives conceived. Occasional exemptions were also given to such persons as newly settled refugees and newcomers who owned no land.

The rate of poll tax on merchants and slaves was 2 *suan* (240 *ch'ien*), double that for ordinary people.[104] The *k'ou-fu*, also known as *k'ou-ch'ien*, was annually levied on all minors between the ages of three and fourteen at the rate of 20 *ch'ien* a head. The revenues, as already explained, went to the imperial court, although the additional sum of 3 *ch'ien* levied in the reign of Wu-ti was appropriated by the state treasury to be spent on horses for the army. From the reign of Yüan-ti (49–33 B.C.) onward and presumably into Later Han, it was levied only on those between seven and fourteen years of age.[105]

The *keng-fu*, which was said to have been originally a commutation of three days' military service on the frontiers, was exacted from adult males (probably those between the ages of fifteen and fifty-six) at the rate of 3

103 *HS* 24A, pp. 1137, 1143 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 182, 209).

104 Katō Shigeshi believes that the *suan* was not fixed at 120 *ch'ien* until the reign of Ch'eng-ti (33–7 B.C.); his argument is most easily accessible in his article, "A study on the Suan-fu, the poll tax of the Han dynasry," *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Tōyō Bunko*, 1 (1926), 51–68. Hiranaka Reiji, however, considers that the rate was fixed at the beginning of Han: see his *Chūgoku kodai no densei to zeihō* (Kyoto, 1967), Chapter 9, for a study of this subject.

105 Hiranaka (*Chūgoku kodai no densei to zeihō*, pp. 302f.) thinks that the *k'ou-fu* was at first levied on minors between the ages of seven and fourteen at the rate of 23 *ch'ien*, and that the age was subsequently lowered to three in the reign of Wu-ti (141–87 B.C.), at which time 3 *ch'ien* of the tax was again diverted for the purchase of cavalry mounts.

ch'ien a head. This had to be paid by all regardless of fitness or social status. Those who paid were not, however, exempted from regular military and labor service.[106]

The *suan-tzu* or property tax was assessed on the basis of the individual's declaration of the value of his property, the rate being 1 *suan* (120 *ch'ien*) for each 10,000 *ch'ien* of the said property. It was first imposed in 203 B.C., the same year as the adult poll tax, but was greatly changed by Wu-ti in 119 B.C. In this year the rate for merchants and manufacturers was raised sharply, the former (whether registered or not) having to pay 1 *suan* for every 2000 *ch'ien* of their property, and the latter 1 *suan* for every 4000 *ch'ien*. At the same time all vehicles owned by the common people were taxed 1 *suan*, vehicles belonging to merchants 2 *suan*, and all boats more than 5 *chang* (11.5 m) in length 1 *suan*.

These measures were designed simultaneously to repress merchants and to improve the state finances, which were being drained by military expenditures; they were rigorously enforced. Those who gave partial or evasive reports on their property were sentenced to one year's exile on the frontier together with confiscation of the property, and their accusers were rewarded with half the sum involved. Many great merchants were ruined as a result, and property worth hundreds of millions of *ch'ien* was confiscated, including thousands of slaves and from a hundred to several hundred *ch'ing* of land in each county, depending on its size. Slaves so obtained were allocated among government offices and the land was divided between the lesser treasury and the superintendent of agriculture.[107]

Labor services during Han were of two kinds, labor service proper (*keng-tsu*) and military service (*cheng-tsu*). The former required that all males between the ages of fifteen and fifty-six should work without pay for one month of the year on construction projects and miscellaneous duties in the commanderies and counties. For military service, young men who had reached the age of twenty-three were selected and assigned to be infantrymen, cavalry, or sailors, depending on their place of origin. After one year's training they were liable, until the age of fifty-six, to be called up for one year of service either in the guards at the capital or in the border garrisons.

Other taxes included those on merchants and manufacturers (like the *shih-tsu* and *hai-tsu*), and those which had been levied on minting, salt

106 *SC* 106, p. 2823, *HS* 7, p. 229 with the comment by Ju Shun (fl. 221–65) on p. 230 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 170); *HS* 24A, p. 1143 (Swann, *Food and money*, p. 209); Loewe, *Records*, Vol. I, pp. 162–63.

107 *HS* 1A, p. 46 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 93); *HS* 24B, p. 1166 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 278f.).

making, and iron manufacture during the period before the establishment of government monopolies on those activities. In addition, there were taxes on brewing, manufactures of all sorts, and usury. All were assessed on the basis of income reports submitted by family heads. False or proxy reports were penalized by a fine of 2 *chin* of gold (0.5 kg.; 20,000 *ch'ien*) and the confiscation of the offender's property. The rates of taxation on the various commodities are unknown, apart from that on liquor which, on the discontinuance of the monopoly in 81 B.C., was fixed at 2 *ch'ien* per *sheng* (0.2 liter).[108]

Apart from the land tax and labor service, all these taxes were to be paid in money by peasants as well as merchants. This was a unique situation in China up to the T'ang dynasty, and even in the tripartite *tsu-yung-tiao* system of T'ang the basic obligations were paid in grain, hemp, silk, and labor service, only the additional *hu-shui* tax being paid in cash. Only in the latter half of the eighth century was the principle of paying taxes in money firmly reestablished, and even then it could be commuted into commodity terms and was frequently substituted by silk.[109] The fact that the Han tax system was based on money indicates that the peasantry of those days was substantially involved in the monetary economy.

The only way for peasants to acquire money was to work for wages or to sell their produce on the market. It is well known that peasants did work for hire on the estates of great landowners or in various manufactures such as brewing, but it is inconceivable that this was so common as to determine the form of the tax system. On the other hand, to sell their produce the peasants would need easy access to markets, but it was not until the late T'ang period that these developed on any large scale in rural communities. It is thus hard to understand how peasants were able to pay most of their taxes in cash as demanded.[110]

There are, however, one or two conjectures that may throw light on this problem. As was mentioned earlier, peasants lived within walled residential areas rather than on isolated farms. Although markets existed only in the cities, those peasants living near enough were probably supposed to bring their produce there and to exchange it for money in order to pay their taxes. Toward the end of Later Han and thereafter, as the rural community proper began to develop apart from the cities, peasants became isolated from their markets and found it increasingly hard to get money. This is

108 For the *hai-tsu*, see *HS* 24A, p. 1141 (Swann, *Food and money*, p. 193); Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 370, 375. In a politically motivated polemic a statesman observes that the *shih-tsu* paid in the great city of Lin-tzu, with its 100,000 households, amounted to one thousand units of gold.
109 For the *tsu-yung-tiao* system, see Twitchett, *Financial administration*, pp. 24f.
110 For a farming family's livelihood and need for cash, see Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp. 67f.

why taxation was increasingly levied in kind, beginning with the household levy (*hu-tiao*) system established by Ts'ao Ts'ao at the end of Han and culminating in the *tsu-yung-tiao* system of T'ang.[111]

The large circulation of money during the Han period (which indicates a correspondingly large circulation of goods) was the medium through which the state exerted its control over the people by means of the tax system. Given the rather primitive transport of those days, it would obviously have been a vast undertaking for the authorities to collect all taxes in kind, gathering and distributing these goods throughout the whole country. It was probably to overcome this difficulty that the state began to collect taxes in money; in other words, the payment of taxes in cash was not so much the natural result of a fully developed monetary economy as a method necessitated by the inadequate transportation of the times. This is partially borne out by the fact that in the Western Chin dynasty (215–316), when taxes were levied in kind, an exception was made for the barbarians on the remotest borders who had to pay in cash. Such a conjecture is, however, based on the premise that a monetary economy was reasonably well developed in the Han period.

There is a third possibility. Whereas taxes were levied in money, the peasants may actually have paid them in kind through the agency of wealthy men or merchants, who would exchange the peasants' produce for money at the markets, making a profit out of the transaction. Alternatively, peasants may have borrowed money from such men at high interest rates and thus paid their taxes in cash without having any contact with the markets. Several such instances are recorded.[112]

Considerations such as these must be accepted if the fact that Han taxes were for the most part payable in money is to be explained. It was the resulting large-scale circulation of money that enabled merchants to make the profits that they then invested in land to become, in their turn, great landowners. They thus joined the existing powerful families, themselves not averse to increasing their wealth by commercial ventures, in asserting control over the increasingly impoverished peasantry. Inevitably, as it lost its direct authority over the peasants, the central government began to decline. By promoting the circulation of money, the state itself had provided the opportunity for the rise of the merchants, the very social class which it took most pains to suppress.

111 The earliest reference to the *hu-tiao* system is to be found in *SKC* (Wei) 23, p. 668, under A.D. 197. For its adoption ca. 280 see *Chin shu* 26, p. 790. See Miyazaki Ichisada, "Shin Butei no kochōshiki ni tsuite," in *Ajiashi Kenkyū* (Studies in Oriental history), no. 1 (Kyoto, 1957), pp. 185–212; and Nishijima Sadao, *Chūgoku keizaishi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1966), pp. 287f., 363f.

112 For rates of interest, see Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 222–23 note 368.

Monopolies and the control of commerce

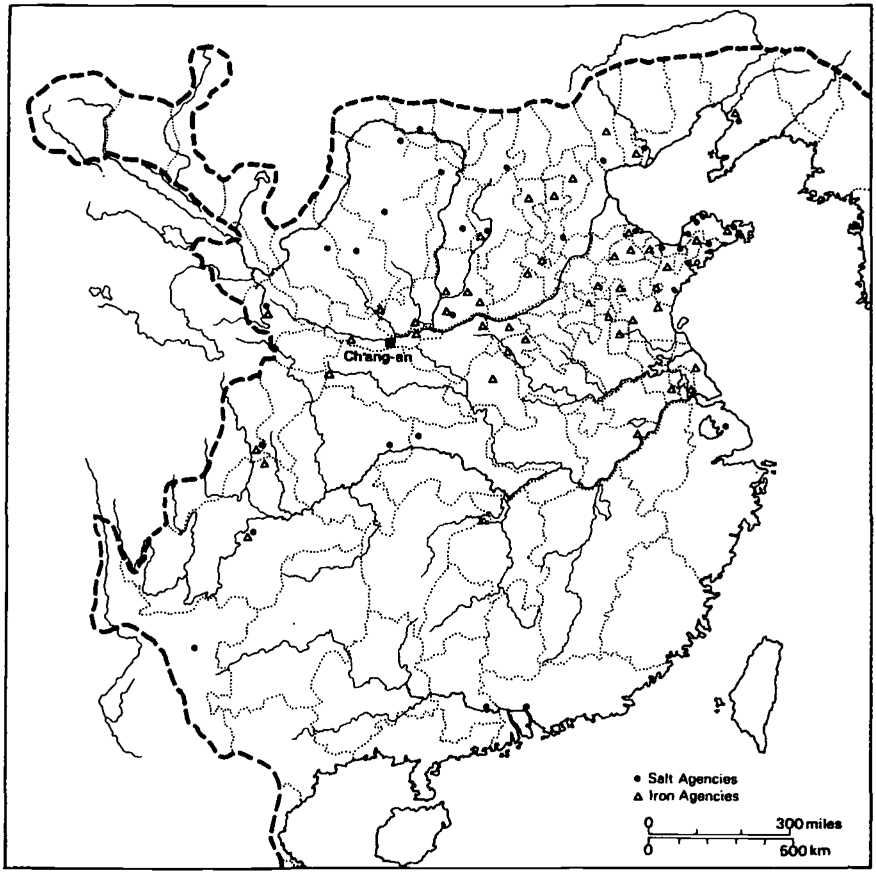
Owing to vast expenditures on various military expeditions in the reign of Wu-ti (141–87 B.C.), state finances were greatly depleted, and it became imperative to find new sources of revenue.[113] The result was the creation in 119 B.C. of state monopolies in salt and iron, these being two indispensable commodities which had hitherto provided large profits for private enterprise (and whose large labor force tended to evade government control and become a source of social unrest). Other measures taken in the same year and with the same ends included the increased property tax on merchants and manufacturers.

Although the tax income previously levied on private salt and iron manufacture had been allotted to the lesser treasury, the revenues from the new monopoly went to the superintendent of agriculture. The measure perhaps originated in the previous year, 120 B.C., when a wealthy salt manufacturer from Ch'i, Tung-kuo Hsien-yang, and a great iron founder from Nan-yang named K'ung Chin had been made assistants to the superintendent of agriculture and put in charge of the taxes on salt and iron. It was at their suggestion that the monopoly began a year later; it was they who toured the commanderies setting up offices and appointing officials to enforce it. Many of these officials were chosen from former salr and iron manufacturers.[114]

There were differences in the administration of the two monopolies. In the case of iron, the superintendent of agriculture had direct control over the forty-eight iron manufacturing agencies (*t'ieh-kuan*) in the districts where the ore was mined; in other areas, minor agencies (*shao t'ieh-kuan*) which melted down and recast scrap iron were controlled by the local commandery or county administrations. Labor was provided by convicts, professional craftsmen, local men performing labor service, and occasionally government slaves. All production and marketing was done by the offices of the monopoly, and the iron agricultural implements which they made were the only ones available to the peasantry. It may be added that a somewhat biased source, in the form of the criticisms leveled against the system of monopolies, complained of the disadvantages resulting from the state monopoly. The finished goods were often poorly made, but the price

113 For these expenditures see Michael Loewe, "The campaigns of Han Wu-ti," in *Chinese ways in warfare*, ed. Frank A. Kierman, Jr. and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), p. 99; *HS* 24B, pp. 1159, 1165 (Swann *Food and money*, pp. 251, 274); *HS* 61, p. 2704 (Hulsewé, *China in Central Asia*, p. 236); and *SC* 123, p. 3178.

114 *HS* 24B, pp. 1164–66 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 271–77).



Map 17. The salt and iron agencies, A.D. 2

was uniform irrespective of quality. Moreover, since the officials responsible were frequently absent, the goods were often difficult to obtain at all.[115]

In the case of salt, however, manufacturing was still undertaken by the former private salt makers. The thirty-four salt manufacturing agencies (*yen-kuan*) merely lent them the equipment for boiling the salt and bought the finished product from them for resale to the people. There was a complete prohibition on private marketing of salt.

Sang Hung-yang[116] aided Tung-kuo Hsien-yang and K'ung Chin in their efforts to enforce the monopoly system. When K'ung Chin was pro-

115 See *YTL* 6 (*p'ien* 36), pp. 252–53.

116 For Sang Hung-yang see pp. 562f., 584 above; and J. L. Kroll, "Toward a study of the economic views of Sang Hung-yang," *Early China*, 4 (1978–79), 11–18.

moted to superintendent of agriculture in 115 B.C., Sang Hung-yang succeeded him as assistant. He then inaugurated a new financial policy, incorporating the state transportation or "equal supply" (*chün-shu*) system. Although the details of the policy are unclear, its outlines can be established from a section in the *Discourses on salt and iron* and the interpretations of commentators.

Previously, local products required by the central government had been transported to the capital by merchants, who thus found great opportunities for profit; the goods were frequently of poor quality, and the transport system was complicated. The government therefore ordered that in distant localities goods should be bought with the proceeds of taxes and that new local offices, *chün-shu kuan*, should be set up to arrange their purchase and transportation to the capital. The aim was to repress merchants and at the same time to channel the profits which they had made into the coffers of the government.[117]

The operation of the new policy ran into some difficulties when offices in the capital city began sending their own officials to the districts to buy goods; competition among them raised prices and even caused a shortage of funds for transportation. In 110 B.C., when Sang Hung-yang succeeded K'ung Chin as superintendent of agriculture, he therefore increased the number of *chün-shu kuan* in the provinces with the intention that they should buy goods in quantity when they were cheap and thus raise and stabilize prices. At the same time he created a price stabilization office (*p'ing-chun kuan*) at the capital, with the intention that it would store such local products and sell them when prices rose. In addition to benefitting the people by lowering prices, this also struck a direct blow at the great merchants. A further move in 98 B.C. was to establish a government monopoly in the brewing and selling of liquor.

All these financial policies were highly successful in increasing state revenues. It is recorded, for instance, that in one year the storehouses in the capital and at Kan-ch'üan were filled with grain and that 5 million bolts of silk were gathered in the capital alone.[118]

After Wu-ti's death in 87 B.C., his economic policies continued to be upheld by Sang Hung-yang (who had become imperial counsellor and now dominated the government), despite vociferous opposition from merchants and powerful families with commercial interests. Further difficulties were

117 For the *chün-shu* system, see Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 64–65; and Kroll, "Sang Hung-yang," pp. 12, and 17 note 17. The main sources are *HS* 24B, p. 1174 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 314f.); and *YTL* 1 (*p'ien* 1), p. 4 (Gale, *Discourses* [1931], pp. 9f.).

118 For the stabilization of prices, see *HS* 24B, p. 1175 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 316–18); Swann, *Food and money*, p. 65. For the monopoly imposed on liquor, see *HS* 6, p. 204 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 107).

caused for Sang Hung-yang by his rival at court, Huo Kuang, who gained influence through his control of the boy emperor Chao-ti. It was Huo Kuang who supported the Confucian side against Sang Hung-yang's policies in the debate on salt and iron held in 81 B.C.

The account we have of this debate was probably compiled some twenty years after the event, and it is possible that it was colored by the prevailing mood of politics at that time, which favored the opponents of the monopolies and related financial policies. Much of the text should be regarded as rhetorical, and there is no means of determining how accurately it represents the actual contributions of the real-life protagonists. The scholars who are shown as arguing so passionately for the discontinuance of the monopolies were actually promoting the interests of the great merchants and powerful families when they reproached the government for competing with the people for profit. They also asserted that the people had to purchase poor-quality government salt at high prices and travel long distances to buy inadequate iron tools, and that under the *chün-shu* and *p'ing-chun* schemes they were compelled to weave hemp and silk, but that prices for the goods they produced were still not effectively controlled. Such charges were very likely true, but the new financial policies were too lucrative to be discontinued and only the liquor monopoly, which had been very difficult to enforce, was abolished. Ironically enough, the monopolies were continued by Huo Kuang even after he had secured Sang Hung-yang's death on a charge of conspiracy, simply because the government could not afford to abandon them.

Later, between the years 57 and 54 B.C., the government made an effort to control the price of grain by setting up storehouses called "ever-level granaries" (*ch'ang-p'ing ts'ang*), mostly in border areas. This followed the suggestion of Keng Shou-ch'ang, the aim being to buy grain when it was cheap and sell it at low prices when it became expensive. This is said to have benefitted the public by stabilizing grain prices, while of course also making a profit for the government.[119]

Both the granaries and the salt and iron agencies were abolished in 44 B.C., on the grounds that they had caused the government to compete for profit with its own people; the move was doubtless hastened by pressures from those with vested financial interests. Not surprisingly, it proved impossible to do without the revenues which the monopolies had raised, and they were restored three years later, in 41.[120]

Wang Mang in effect continued and amplified Wu-ti's financial policies

119 See *HS* 24A, p. 1141 (Swann, *Food and money*, p. 195).
120 *HS* 9, pp. 285, 291 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 314, 324); *HS* 24A, p. 1142 (Swann, *Food and money*, p. 199).

by establishing the so-called six controls in A.D. 10. These amounted to monopolies on salt, iron, liquor, the natural products of land and water (such as fish), and copper mining and minting, together with controls on prices (*wu-chün*) and financial transactions (*she-tai*). Under the last named of these six, price standardization offices or *wu-chün kuan* were set up in the capital, Ch'ang-an, and also in Lo-yang, Lin-tzu, Han-tan, Wan, and Ch'eng-tu to fix standard prices for grain, hemp, and silk in city markets, and to maintain them by selling their stored goods when prices were too high and buying unsold goods when prices fell too low. In addition, the government lent money to the public, free of interest if it was for funerals or festivals, and at 10 percent for business purposes. These measures were all designed to suppress merchants and usurers and to protect the public. But admirable in conception as they may have been, they left much to be desired in execution, and popular resentment against these and Wang Mang's other economic reforms hastened his downfall.[121]

In Later Han, which depended on the support of powerful families and great merchants, Wang Mang's attempt to assert state control over the economy was naturally abandoned and the monopolies and commercial controls of Former Han were either abolished or transferred from the control of the central government to that of the local administration. The salt and iron monopolies were revived for a short time in the reigns of Chang-ti (A.D. 76–78) and Ho-ti (A.D. 89–105), but never on such a large scale as in Former Han.[122] Thus, the implementation of these financial policies from the reign of Wu-ti (141–87 B.C.) onward can be seen to reflect the government's changing relationship with great merchants and manufacturers and its growing rivalry with the powerful families.

The monopolistic economic policies originated by the Han government were to have a considerable effect on the development of the Chinese economy in later times. Iron never again became a government monopoly. Owing to the fact that iron ore was widespread and easy to mine and smelt, it was subsequently developed by private enterprise. Salt, on the other hand, was later to become one of the principal sources of state revenue. Every major dynasty from the late T'ang period onward devised complicated schemes for taxing or monopolizing the manufacture of salt. As this was a vital commodity, it could be depended on as a steady source of income. Later, when tea came to be a popular beverage, it too was some-

121 *HS* 24B, p. 1181 (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 342f.; Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 526f.). For a discussion of the principles involved in the government's participation in profit-making ventures in A.D. 84–86, see *HHS* 43, pp. 1460–61.

122 For the history of the monopolies in the Later Han, see *HHS* 43, p. 1460; and Li Chien-nung, *Hsien-Ch'in liang Han ching-chi shih kao* (Peking, 1957), p. 180.

times the object of a government monopoly, as in the Sung and Ming dynasties. Even the control of commerce, which was extremely difficult to put into practice, was revived in the Sung period by Wang An-shih under the identical name of *chün-shu*. Such essential features of the policies of later dynasties were thus the legacy of the financial innovations of the Han dynasty.

CHAPTER 11

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY OF LATER HAN

Social and economic history is seldom marked by distinct turning points. In the Han period, each of the four centuries witnessed major developments in the organization of the society and economy. Still, the society of the first century A.D. was very close to that of the first century B.C., with established patterns largely continued, and it is purely as a matter of convenience that the social and economic history of the dynasty is viewed here in terms of two periods rather than three or four. Because of the numerous continuities between Former and Later Han, a full description of the economic and social life of the Later Han is not necessary. Such matters as diet, housing, clothing, means of transport, the organization of families, villages, and enterprises changed only very slowly during Han, often too slowly for changes to be perceived in the kinds of sources surviving today. Moreover, the basic features of agricultural technology and financial administration have already been described in preceding chapters. In this chapter emphasis will be placed on describing and analyzing major structural changes in the economy and society, such as the reorganization of agricultural production, the emergence of new forms of local organization, and the continuing evolution of the composition of the upper class.

ECONOMIC HISTORY

From a reading of the Standard Histories one might think that a major shift in economic development occurred between the Former and the Later Han. In Later Han sources, great merchants are mentioned less frequently, and "drifting" peasants are mentioned much more frequently. Yet this evidence does not prove economic depression or a reduction in commerce. The absence of biographies of great entrepreneurs and treatises on fiscal matters in the *Hou-Han shu* and *San-kuo chih* may well be ascribed to the historians' choice of subject matter, and probably reflects a decline in government concern with managing the economy and experimenting with fiscal matters. Moreover, peasants were uprooted by a variety of economic forces other than general depression. When archeological and literary evi-

dence are considered together, it seems clear that Later Han continued to witness economic stability or even slow growth in total production until warfare seriously disrupted life in much of the country after A.D. 184. Yet at the same time the organization of economic activity underwent major shifts, which caused social dislocation of serious proportions.[1]

Commerce and industry

In the Later Han period, commerce and industry were not subject to as much political interference as they had been in the first century B.C. and during Wang Mang's reign.[2] Government management of currency showed none of the frequent reversals of that period. The minting of five-*shu* coins was resumed in A.D. 40, and the supply of coins in circulation was continually supplemented until the Han court all but collapsed. Moreover, in A.D. 88 the government monopolies on salt and iron were temporarily abandoned, with part of the revenue to be made up by taxing private manufacturers. Even the swords and shields used by the army were purchased from private entrepreneurs.[3]

It was the impression at the time that the failure to curb commerce and industry led to unprecedented extravagance and widespread consumption of luxury items. Although this argument is made by a number of social critics, Wang Fu (ca. 90–ca. 165) stated it most forcefully. He perceived the capital and other large cities as places where trade and commerce, particularly in luxuries, were the dominant activities:[4]

1 The best comprehensive economic history of the period is Li Chien-nung, *Hsien-Ch'in liang Han ching-chi shih kao* (Peking, 1957). The best work in English is Cho-yun Hsu, *Han agriculture: The formation of early Chinese agrarian economy* (206 B.C.–A.D. 220) (Seattle and London, 1980). (Hsu's book appeared too late to be used in preparing this chapter, but as a convenience to the reader, many cross-references to it are given in the notes). A useful collection of primary sources on all aspects of Han economy was compiled by Ma Fei-pai, "Ch'in-Han ching-chi-shih tzu-liao," *Shih-huo*, 2:8 (1935), 22–33; 2:10 (1935), 7–32; 3:1 (1936), 9–31; 3:2 (1936), 2–25; 3:3 (1936), 8–38; 3:8 (1936), 37–52; 3:9 (1936), 9–33. Study of the economic history of the Han must now also make use of archeological findings; see the Introduction to this volume. A valuable, but by now outdated, study of the significance of archeological findings for economic history is provided by Ch'en Chih, *Liang Han ching-chi shih-liao lun-ts'ung* (Sian, 1958, rpt. 1980).

2 For details, see Ying-shih Yü, *Trade and expansion: A study in the structure of Sino-barbarian economic relations* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), pp. 18–21; and Chapter 10 above, pp. 574f.

3 See *Ch'üan Hou-Han wen* 46, pp. 6b–7a, for a passage attributed to Ts'ui Shih, on whom see Patricia Ebrey, *The aristocratic families of early imperial China: A case study of the Po-ling Ts'ui family* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 36–49.

4 *Ch'ien-fu lun* 3 ("Fou-chih"), pp. 120f.; *Hou-Han shu* 49, pp. 1633f. cites another version of this text. On Wang Fu's social thought, see Étienne Balazs, "Political philosophy and social crisis at the end of the Han dynasty," in his *Chinese civilization and bureaucracy: Variations on a theme* (New Haven and London, 1964), pp. 198–205. Similar criticisms were voiced in Former Han by Tung Chung-shu (*Han shu* 56, pp. 2520–21) and the scholars participating in the debate on the salt and iron monopolies (*Yen-t'ieh lun* 6 [p'ien 29], pp. 201f.).

If we examine contemporary Lo-yang, there are ten times as many people involved in unnecessary work as there are farmers, and ten times as many idlers as those engaged in unnecessary work. This means that for each man farming one hundred people are depending on him for food, for each woman in sericulture one hundred people are depending on her for clothes. How can one person supply a hundred? In the land there are one hundred commanderies, one thousand counties, and ten thousand markets and towns, and they are all like this. How then can the basic occupations [agriculture] and secondary occupations [craft and commerce] supply each other, and how will people be able to avoid hunger and cold? . . .

Nowadays people are extravagant in clothing, excessive in food and drink, and fascinated with clever language. They become expert in the arts of deception. . . . Some able-bodied men never learn how to handle plows and hoes, taking roaming and gambling as their profession. . . . There are also plaster carts and earthenware dogs, horses, figures of singers and actors, various children's toys. . . . Moreover, nowadays many [women] do not cultivate cooking and have given up tending silkworms and weaving, instead taking up the study of shamanistic prayers, drumming and dancing to serve the spirits, in order to deceive the common people. . . . Some cut good silk for the inscription of prayers; they order workers to paint the pieces, hire others to write the prayer, thus fashioning empty charms to seek blessings. Some cut silk a few fractions of an inch wide, five inches long, which they then embroider and wear. Or they twist silk into cords and cut it to make bracelets. . . . None of these sorts of things are of any help to good farmers and working women nor of any use to the world, yet good food is spent on them, daylight hours are wasted on them. . . . At present, the clothing, food and drink, carriages, adornment, and houses of the noble relatives in the capital all exceed even what is prescribed for kings. These people usurp the privileges of their superiors to an extreme. Their attendants, slaves, coachmen, and concubines all wear fine hemp, the thinnest cloth from Yüeh, sheer fabrics, fine open-work silk, silk broadcloth, brocades and embroideries, rhinoceros horns, pearls and jade, amber and tortoise shell subtly decorated with figures of stones and mountains, gold and silver inlaid and engraved, deerskin slippers with decorated laces and colored uppers. Being arrogantly extravagant, not only do they usurp the privileges of their rulers, but they brag to each other about it. Were Chi-tzu alive today, the servants and handmaidens are what would grieve him.[5] When the rich and wealthy get married, they use ten carts and ten bridal wagons. Mounted slaves and attending youths proceed on either side of the carts and lead them. The rich compete to do better than one another while the poor are ashamed that they cannot keep up. In this way the expenses of one festivity destroy the accumulated estate of a lifetime. . . . [With regard to the coffins for funerals], recent generations use catalpa, locust, juniper, and lacquer wood, the products of every area. After glue and lacquer is applied to them, the boards are fastened by joinery and polished so smooth that the seams cannot be seen. The coffin is strong enough to depend upon and durable enough to bear a weight. This should be sufficient. However, the noble relatives in the capital now all want catalpa, camphor, and cedar from Chiang-nan [the southeast], and distant areas compete to imitate this style. But

5 Chi-tzu was an adviser to Chou, the last Shang king, and remonstrated with him about his extravagance.

catalpa and camphor are produced in faraway areas and moreover come from deep in mountain valleys; to get them it is necessary to cross mountains, ascend ten thousand feet, cross gorges a thousand feet wide, and cling to the edges of precipices. It thus takes days to find the timber, months to chop it up, and a multitude of men to transport the logs. Lines of oxen must be used to get them to the water. They are put into the sea and sent by way of the Huai up the Yellow River. They arrive in Lo-yang after travelling several thousand *li*. They then require days and months for the craftsmen to carve. Thus to complete one coffin requires one million men and and its weight will amount to 10,000 *chin*. A multitude is needed to pick it up, a large cart to transport it. Yet east to Lo-lang [in Korea], west to Tun-huang, within ten thousand *li*, people fight for the chance to use them.

In this essay Wang Fu's goal was not to describe the economy, but to criticize contemporary mores. In his zeal to ridicule he may sometimes have exaggerated, but his impression of the flourishing state of crafts and commerce was not without a basis in fact. Throughout Later Han, technological advances continued to be made, including the perfection of the process of papermaking and the development of the wind-powered bellows and an early form of porcelain.[6] From archeological excavations it appears that luxury goods, such as lacquerware, bronze work, and silk brocades, were more widespread (though not of higher quality) than they had been in Former Han.[7] In one matter Wang Fu stressed, the extravagance of funerals, he was fully correct; the trend throughout the Han period was for ever more lavish and expensive burials. This is most clearly seen in the 225 tombs excavated in Lo-yang in 1953.[8] Even excluding the most lavish Later Han tombs, which may have been for exceptionally important or wealthy individuals, the tombs of what appear to have been ordinary officials steadily increased in size and structural complexity.

Wang Fu was also not exaggerating when he said that these metropolitan styles were copied from Lo-lang in modern Korea to Tun-huang in Kansu. Well-preserved tombs in both areas have survived, giving particularly good evidence of the availability of luxury goods (at least for officials and rich persons) at great distances from the capital. In the vicinity of Wu-wei, somewhat more than half the distance from Ch'ang-an to Tun-huang, over seventy Han tombs have been excavated from a large burial ground.[9] Tomb

6 See Fan Wen-lan, *Chung-kuo t'ung-shih* (Peking, 1965), Vol. II, pp. 211–17. On paper, see also P'an Chi-hsing, "Ts'ung ch'u-t'u ku-chih ti mo-ni shih-yen k'an Han-tai tsao ma-chih chi-shu," *WW*, 1977.1, 51–58; P'an Chi-hsing, *Chung-kuo tsao-chih chi-shu shih kao* (Peking, 1979); and Wang Chü-hua and Li Yü-hua, "Ts'ung chi chung Han chih ti fen-hsi chien-ting shih lun wo-kuo tsao chih shu ti fa-ming," *WW*, 1980.1, 78–85.

7 This generalization must be made cautiously since there are many more archeological sites for Later than Former Han, especially for persons of non-noble rank.

8 See Lo-yang ch'ü k'ao-ku fa-chüeh tui, *Lo-yang Shao-kou Han mu* (Peking, 1959).

9 Kan-su sheng po-wu-kuan, "Wu-wei Mo-chü-tzu san tso Han mu fa-chüeh chien pao," *WW*, 1972.12, 9–23.

number 49, dating from the mid-second century, had a grave chamber the size of a long but narrow room, measuring 4 by 2 meters. In it were found fourteen pieces of pottery; a variety of wooden objects, including models of a horse, pig, ox, chicken, chicken coop, and a single-horned animal; seventy copper cash; a crossbow mechanism made of bronze; a writing brush; a lacquer-encased inkstone; a lacquer tray and bowl; a wooden comb; a jade ornament; a pair of hemp shoes; a straw bag; the remains of an inscribed banner; a bamboo hairpin; two straw satchels; and a stone lamp.

A common complaint of Later Han writers (which can also be found earlier) was the inequitable distribution of material goods. The rich had more than they could possibly use, while others went without. In all known societies beyond the primitive stage, such a situation has existed to some extent. The important question is whether wealth had become concentrated in so few hands that commerce almost solely concerned luxury goods, while the vast bulk of the population was less involved with commercial economy than they had been in Former Han, leading to a general decline in economic activity.[10] The available evidence, on the whole, does not support this idea. There was no diminution in the use of cash as a medium of exchange and of storing material wealth, and there was continued expansion in the use of items acquired through trade, such as iron plows and bronze mirrors.

Concerning money, copper cash gained full supremacy in the Later Han. By then cash was used as the normal measure of wealth and employed in large transactions. For instance, when Ti-wu Lun (fl. 40–85) was appointed governor of Shu, he found that the subordinate officers were all rich.[11] He described their wealth not in terms of the size of their landholdings or the number of their employees, but abstractly in cash: "Their property amounts to as much as ten million cash."[12] Transactions of hundreds of thousands of cash were not uncommon, and some men had large stores of money. When Yang Ping (92–165) was in economic difficulties, one of his former subordinates offered him the sum of one million cash.[13]

The influence that money had gained in people's lives can be seen in the

10 In no part of Han was life for the ordinary peasant very much commercialized. The question here is one of change. Because the *Hou-Han shu* does not mention great merchants nearly as often as the *Han shu* does, or for other reasons, some scholars have inferred that interregional trade declined. (E.g., Wang Chung-lo, *Wei Chin Nan-pei-ch'ao shih* [Shanghai, 1979], pp. 25–26. See also Tada Kensuke, "Kandai no chihō shōgyō ni tsuite," *Shichō*, 92 [1965], pp. 36–49, which reviews Japanese work on this subject.) At the other extreme, Yü, *Trade and expansion*, pp. 18–21, sees the laissez-faire policies of Later Han as favorable to trade; and Hsu, *Han agriculture*, sees, if anything, an increasing reliance on markets by peasants. See also Chapter 10 above, pp. 600f.

11 "Subordinate" officers were low officials and clerks appointed to their posts by their direct superiors and not considered members of the regular bureaucracy.

12 *HHS* 41, p. 1398. 13 *HHS* 54, pp. 1769–71.

variety of transactions that in theory could have been conducted through an exchange of land, goods, or services, but which were conducted in cash. Wages in cash are frequently mentioned.[14] Gifts in cash were common; the Ma family, relatives of the wife of Ming-ti (r. 57–75), were criticized for gaining adherents by giving gentlemen 5,000 cash each at the winter festival.[15] On a grander scale, the emperors throughout the dynasty in their gifts to imperial relatives and officials gave not land, but cash and silk. In times of famine and natural disaster, grants of cash were given to stricken families to pay for burials. For example, in 167, in order to help those who had suffered from a tidal wave along the coast of Po-hai (modern Hopei), 2,000 cash was given for each dead person aged over seven.[16] Thus, rather than dig graves and bury the poor itself, the government relied on the efficiency of money, confident that even rustic peasants were familiar with its use.

Further evidence for the strength of the money economy was the partial transformation of the labor service obligation into a monetary tax.[17] By Later Han, commutation of the one-month labor service obligation seems to have been common; probably it was encouraged by the magistrates and governors, who could carry out public projects more conveniently with hired laborers than with drafted peasants. Labor service was sometimes thought of in terms of cash. For instance, a stone inscription of 130 celebrates road improvements that had eliminated the need for yearly repairs carried out by labor service; it estimates the savings at 300,000 cash a year.[18] Sometimes it may have even been impossible for a peasant to perform the labor service in person if he wanted to. At least that seems to be the implication of the recurrent remission of the commutation tax during natural disasters.[19]

The evidence for the continued flourishing of interregional trade through Later Han is largely circumstantial. Efforts were expended to maintain bridges and roads and facilities for travelers.[20] Nineteen stone inscriptions commemorating the construction of roads and bridges survive from Later Han. In A.D. 63, for example, Han-chung commandery (southwest Shensi), under central government orders, repaired the Pao-yeh road, connecting it across the Ch'in-ling mountain range to the capital through extremely

14 See Lao Kan, "Han-tai ti ku-yung chih-tu," *CYYY*, 23 (1951), 77–87.

15 *HHS* 41, p. 1398. 16 *HHS* 7, p. 319.

17 Details of the labor service obligation are poorly understood. See Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp. 77–79 and notes.

18 *Li hsü* 15, pp. 4b–6a. While few stone inscriptions survive from Former Han, the much larger number for Later Han forms valuable evidence of a type not available for the earlier period and of particular relevance to this chapter. See Ebrey, "Later Han stone inscriptions," *HJAS* 40 (1980), 325–53.

19 For example, *HHS* 4, pp. 183, 190 (for 97 and 102); *HHS* 6, pp. 260, 269 (for 132 and 139).

20 See Lao Kan, "Lun Han-tai chih lu-yün yü shui-yün," *CYYY*, 16 (1947), 69–91.

difficult terrain. Altogether 623 trestles, 5 large bridges, 258 *li* (107 km) of roads, and 64 buildings such as rest houses, post stations, and relay stations were completed.[21] Other inscriptions record bridge and road projects undertaken between A.D. 57 and 174.

There were, of course, numerous reasons for maintaining roads. A unified political system could be maintained only as long as the government had the means of quickly dispatching officials, troops, or messengers as needed. Such a system of transportation, once established, facilitated commerce. At the local level, road and bridge projects seem to have been initiated as much for the sake of traveling merchants as for officials. For instance, in explaining why a bridge and a stone road were built to replace a trestle road in Szechwan, an inscription notes that the autumn floods made it impossible for merchants to ford the river. Since the trestle road was very narrow and 3,000 feet long, vehicles could not pass each other. When the warning system failed, collisions occurred, "in a year there were up to several thousand carts falling off."[22] In the south, transportation was more frequently by boat, and a number of models of boats have been found in Later Han tombs in that area. Yet communication was not nearly as quick or convenient as in the north. In the middle of the first century, one official reported that in Kuei-yang commandery the people lived deep in the river valleys, almost entirely cut off from the commandery offices and as a consequence not paying their taxes. Officials traveled by boat, yet only with great difficulty. To remedy this situation, he cut a road through the mountains over 500 *li* (200 km) long.[23]

Land transportation in north China was probably as good during Later Han as it was in any period before modern times. Some of the trestle roads built in mountainous country were never rebuilt in later centuries. Officials and men of wealth traveled on horseback or in horse-drawn carriages. Sedan chairs, needed where roads were poor, were not in use. Tomb murals were often decorated with scenes showing processions of officials with their subordinates on horseback and the official riding in a carriage, the artist attempting to capture a sense of great movement and vitality.[24]

Since there seem to have been plenty of rich people and a great deal of cash in circulation in Later Han, there must have been men carrying out the mercantile activities that are known to have been in the hands of great merchants in Former Han, especially in the long-distance trade in luxuries. The official sources that survive seldom mention great merchants, most likely because they were outside political life. But they do mention rich

21 *Chin-shih ts'ui-pien* 5, pp. 12b–17a.
22 *Li-shih* 4, pp. 11a–13a. 23 *HHS* 76, p. 2459.
24 For examples of such paintings, see *Han T'ang pi-hua* (Peking, 1974), Plates 18–21, 28–31.

men. Liang Chi (regent 141–159) is said to have systematically confiscated the wealth of rich men, presumably merchants, including one whose property was worth seventy million cash.[25]

There is also evidence that landlord-merchants played greater roles in the Later Han period than they had earlier.[26] After the government monopolies and marketing systems stopped operation in the last years of Wang Mang's reign (A.D. 9–23), small merchants and prosperous landlords seem often to have stepped in, especially to handle regional trade and trade in everyday necessities. During Ming-ti's reign (A.D. 57–75) an attempt was made to prohibit persons from engaging in both agriculture and commerce, but this rule was soon relaxed or ignored. In fact, in Later Han men do not seem to have distinguished sharply between "amassers of wealth" (*huo-chih*), a term that previously had usually referred to merchants, and "magnates" (*hao-yu*), a term which had usually implied local landowners. For instance, two of Kuang-wu-ti's maternal relatives, Fan Hung (d. A.D. 51) and Li T'ung (d. A.D. 42), were described as men from families which "for generations had amassed wealth," but were also large landowners who married into other landowning families.[27]

Moreover, *hao-yu* sometimes engaged in commercial activities. When the government started buying large quantities of horses for military purposes in 181, it was reported that "The magnates (*hao-yu*) controlled the supply of horses, driving the price up to two million cash per horse."[28] Ts'ui Shih (d. 170), the son and grandson of well-known men of letters, started a brewing business after selling much of his property to pay for his father's burial. He was criticized for his action, but no one seems to have considered it illegal.[29] His commercial bent is further revealed in his monthly guide to estate management, which advised combining agricultural activity with trade in foodstuffs and cloth. That guide lists the most profitable times to buy and sell various goods. For instance, wheat seeds were to be sold in the eighth month, when they were to be planted, and wheat bought in the fifth and sixth months, soon after the harvest, when it was plentiful.[30] Dealing in agricultural produce in this way would have offered many opportunities for profit to the substantial landowner. This sort of

25 *HHS* 34, p. 1181.

26 On this subject, see Ho Ch'ang-chün, *Han T'ang chien feng-chien t'u-ti so-yu-chih hsing-shih yen-chiu* (Shanghai, 1964), pp. 166–69; and Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp. 50f.

27 *HHS* 15, p. 573; *HHS* 32, p. 1119.

28 *HHS* 8, p. 345. 29 *HHS* 52, p. 1731.

30 *Ssu-min yüeh-ling*, pp. 46, 54, 64. On this text see Patricia Ebrey, "Estate and family management in the Later Han as seen in the *Monthly instructions for the four classes of people*," *JESHO*, 17 (1974), 173–205; and Fujita Katsuhisa, " 'Shimin gatsurei' no seikaku ni tsuite Kan dai gunken no shakaizō," *Tōhōgaku*, 67 (1984), pp. 34–47. For a full translation of the work, see Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp. 215–18; and Christine Herzer, "Das Szu-min yüeh-ling des Ts'ui Shih: ein Bauern-Kalender aus der Späteren Han-Zeit," Diss. Hamburg Univ., 1963.

trade is quite different from long-distance trade in iron implements or fine manufactures, but it constituted a more fundamental component of the economy.

Technical advances in agriculture

Landlords did not need to turn to trading ventures in order to gain wealth. The ways of improving agricultural output in Han were numerous and a subject of wide interest.[31] New iron plowshares could plow deeper, especially when pulled by two oxen. The use of pottery bricks made the construction of wells for irrigation more convenient. Careful attention to the characteristics of soils when selecting crops and determining the time for planting could increase yields, as could methods of treating seeds, applying fertilizers, and transplanting seedlings.

While many of these advances had been initiated in the Former Han period, their benefits were fully realized only as they were adopted around the country. For instance, when Chao Kuo was assigned the task of raising the technical level of agriculture at the end of the second century B.C., draft animals were not widely available.[32] Yet by A.D. 76 a devastating cattle epidemic led to a great reduction in the size of the area under cultivation, indicating that draft animals were by then an important factor in agriculture.[33] Nevertheless, all through the Han period there was wide variation in the levels of technology and reports of backward areas where the most up-to-date techniques were not yet used.

Recent archeology has provided some indication of the spread and improvement of iron implements. In the 1950s alone, over one hundred Later Han sites containing iron implements were found, as compared with sixty for Former Han.[34] By 1978 the remains of Han iron plowshares (mostly Later Han in date) had been discovered in over fifty places, including outlying areas in the modern provinces of Liaoning, Kansu, Szechwan, Kweichow, Anhwei, and Fukien. These remains – along with other findings such as a wooden model of a

31 Technical aspects of Han agriculture are fully discussed in Li, *Ching-chi shih kao*, pp. 154f.; Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp. 81–128; see also Amano Motonosuke, *Chūgoku nōgyōshi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1962), passim; and Chapter 10 above, pp. 559f.

32 For Chao Kuo, see Chapter 10 above, pp. 561f.

33 For Chao Kuo's use of plow oxen, see *HS* 24A, pp. 1138–39 (trans. Nancy Lee Swann, *Food and money in ancient China* (Princeton, 1950), pp. 184–91). For the epidemic, see *HHS* 3, pp. 132–33.

34 Chung-kuo she-hui k'o-hsüeh yüan. K'ao-ku yen-chiu-so, *Hsin Chung-kuo ti k'ao-ku shou-huo* (Peking, 1961), p. 75. On the iron industry, see Ho-nan sheng po-wu-kuan, "Ho-nan Han-tai yeh-t'ieh chi-shu ch'u-t'an," *KKHP*, 1978.1, 1–24; Liu Yün-ts'ai, "Chung-kuo ku-tai kao-lu ti ch'i-yüan ho yen-pien," *WW*, 1978.2, 18–27; Cheng-chou shih po-wu-kuan, "Cheng-chou ku Ying-chen Han-tai yeh-t'ieh i-chih fa-chüeh chien-pao," *WW*, 1978.2, 28–43; "Chung-kuo yeh-chin shih" pien-hsieh tsu, "Ts'ung ku Ying i-chih k'an Han-tai sheng-t'ieh yeh-lien chi-shu," *WW*, 1978.2, 44–47; and Joseph Needham, *The development of iron and steel technology in China* (London, 1958), p. 34.

plow and a half-dozen pictures of men plowing – reveal that the design of plows was gradually improved during the Later Han. By the second century the predominant form was one that was pulled by two oxen and controlled by one man.[35] Archeological evidence also shows technical advances that are not mentioned in any surviving texts; these included the use of a plowshare that could be adjusted to regulate the depth of the furrow, and the use of nose rings for the oxen so that they could be easily controlled from behind without needing another man to lead them.[36]

There is much evidence showing the importance of irrigation during the Later Han period. Several irrigation sites have been discovered. An example from Anhwei consisted of a sluice gate and pond for collecting water from which irrigation ditches could be filled.[37] A tomb in Kwangtung contained a model of irrigated paddy fields.[38] The *Hou-Han shu* mentions over a dozen irrigation projects undertaken by officials, either on their own initiative as governors of commanderies, or on orders from the central government. Many of these projects were intended to repair existing pond and canal systems. In two cases, mention was made of the problem of keeping rural magnates from monopolizing the benefits of these projects.[39] Since local magnates had a personal interest in the benefits of irrigation, they must often have built such dams or undertaken repairs on their own initiative. In north China, irrigation by wells faced with bricks was common. Wells that watered only small areas were not undertaken as government projects, but were sponsored by landowners rhemselves.

Technical knowledge could improve agricultural output in other ways as well. Large landowners could grow a variety of grains and vegetables, each planted and harvested at distinct times according to the conditions of the soil. By thus spreading the agricultural work over much of the year, they could increase the overall productivity of each worker, thereby conferring a distinct advantage over the individual peasant cultivator.[40]

The impoverishment of small peasants

Despite the signs of economic vigor in trade and industry and improved agricultural techniques, there can be little doubt that there was a serious

35 See Chang Chen-hsin, "Han-tai ti niu-keng," *WW*, 1977.8, 57–62.

36 See Hayashi Minao, *Kandai no bunbutsu* (Kyoto, 1976), pp. 268–71.

37 Yin Ti-fei, "An-hui sheng Shou-hsien An-feng-t'ang fa-hsien Han-tai cha-pa kung-ch'eng i-chih," *WW*, 1960.1, 61–62; and Chu Ch'eng-chang, "Shou-hsien An-feng-t'ang Han-tai sao-kung wen-t'i ti t'an-t'ao," *WW*, 1979.5, 86–87.

38 Hsü Heng-pin, "Kuang-tung Fo-shan shih-chiao Lan-shih Tung-Han mu fa-chüeh pao-kao," *KK*, 1964.9, 455–56, Plate 8.10. For similar evidence from Szechwan, see Liu Chih-yüan, "K'ao-ku ts'ai-liao so chien Han-tai ti Ssu-ch'uan nung-yeh," *WW*, 1979.12, 64.

39 *HHS* 2, p. 116; *HHS* 82A, p. 2710.

40 *Ssu-min yüeh-ling*, passim.

"peasant problem" in Later Han. Evidence is of various sorts: the statements of essayists, the government's attempts at remedies, and the migrations and wanderings of the peasants themselves. Especially during and after the second century, migration to the south seems to have been considerable. Already in the census of A.D. 140, large numbers of people were registered in the Yangtze Valley and along the great rivers in Hunan, and the migration to that area continued during the following decades.[41]

Not all peasants in difficulties resettled as pioneers in the south. There was also a large but variable category of unemployed, called drifters or displaced persons in the histories. From A.D. 57 on, even when the harvest was good there were almost always enough drifters for the government to offer rewards to those who would settle down and be registered. In times of natural disasters, the ranks of the displaced would be swelled by normally self-supporting peasants who did not have reserves for a bad year.

It seems likely that many of the peasants who could not remain in their domiciles were victims of technological change and advances in the economy.[42] Even if the tiles for wells and the iron blades for plows, sickles, and hoes were all becoming more widely used, their cost would have been beyond the means of peasants living at subsistence levels. Near the end of Former Han, the government had undertaken to distribute agricultural implements itself to overcome this problem. In Later Han this practice does not seem to have been continued, probably in part because the government no longer controlled iron production continuously. Small landowners, unable to afford the best equipment and methods, would have easily fallen into debt, and incurring debts could mean forfeiting their land to a local magnate. He might keep the family on as tenants, but since with the most advanced methods he needed fewer men for each unit of land, he could not keep all the former occupants. So a pool of rural unemployed was thereby brought into being.

To counteract these processes, the government adopted a number of

41 See James Lee, "Migration and expansion in Chinese history," in *Human migration: Patterns and policies*, ed. William H. McNeill and Ruth Adams (Bloomington, Ind., 1978), pp. 25–47. See also Lao Kan, "Population and geography in the two Han dynasties," in *Chinese social history*, ed. E-tu Zen Sun and John de Francis (Washington, D.C., 1956), pp. 83–101.

42 The argument is given by Goi Naohiro, "Go-Kan ōchō to gōzoku," in *Iwanami Kōza Sekai rekishi*, 4, *Kodai* Vol. IV, (Tokyo, 1970), pp. 426–37. However, Hsu (*Han agriculture*) provides a different explanation of the relationship between technical change and the hardship of the peasants. He sees the smallness of the plots of peasants, both owners and tenants, as the stimulus for the development of new techniques which allowed them to grow more on less land. I would counterargue, however, that better plows made possible the use of less manpower, not more, and that tenants often were closely supervised by landlords who were the ones to decide what to plant and how to cultivate the crop. The landlord would do better with fewer, more productive, tenants than many tenants intensively cultivating small plots. See also the discussion in Chapter 10 above, pp. 555f.

policies aimed at helping small peasants.[43] It taxed agriculture as lightly as possible, under the traditional theory that the best way to protect the people's livelihood was to interfere with it as little as possible. In A.D. 30 the low land tax calculated to be one-thirtieth of the average harvest was restored, and a new land survey was ordered. Kuang-wu-ti made every effort to see that this survey was carried out accurately, with large landowners fully registered. He even had several dozen officials executed for turning in fraudulent registers (A.D. 40). The pressures on officials were so great that riots broke out in several parts of the country, led by landowners who complained that their land was not being fairly recorded.[44] Although it was always assumed that a reduction of taxes or labor services would improve the peasants' plight, the major beneficiary of light land taxes must have been the large landowner who could use the minimum number of workers per unit of land. This is because the poll taxes did not vary in accordance with wealth or income, and would have been larger than the land tax for most peasants with small plots.[45]

Occasionally the government made efforts to resettle peasants as a way of lessening rural poverty. For instance, an edict of 84, which took note of the recent failure to promote agriculture, stated:[46]

> We now order the commanderies and kingdoms to recruit men without land who wish to move to rich and fertile regions elsewhere and to give them permission to do so. When [the recruits] arrive they are to be given state-owned land, paid wages for cultivating, leased seeds and provisions, and lent agricultural tools. For five years no land tax [= rent] will be collected, and no poll tax for three years. Thereafter if they want to return to their native district, they should not be forbidden from doing so.

43 This subject is discussed in detail in Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp. 15–35.

44 *HHS* 1B, pp. 50, 66–67.

45 For instance, a man and wife with three children and a small plot of 20 *mou* (2.25 acres) of fertile land (producing at best 3 bushels per *mou*) would have owed 2 bushels as land tax, equal to approximately 200 cash. If one child were fifteen, one ten, and one two, there would be no poll tax on the youngest, 23 cash on the ten-year-old, and the full 120 cash tax on the fifteen-year old and his two parents, for a total of 383 cash in poll taxes. If labor service were required and the father did not wish personally to perform it, he would have to pay 300 cash (or according to another source 2000 cash) to have it commuted, so that his total burden would have been either 583 or 883 (or, if the figure of 2000 cash for commutation of labour service is correct, the latter figure would be 2,583). Thus the difference in tax between a family with 20 *mou* (583 or 883), and a similar one with ten times as much land (2,383 or 2,683) would have been much less than their difference in earning power. Note also that the ratio of land tax to poll tax depended on the price of grain, which varied throughout Han, owing to long-term and short-term fluctuations. Yields per acre also varied widely from place to place. For more detail on grain prices and farm income, see Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp. 67–80. For the different sums specified for payment for substitute service, see Michael Loewe, *Records of Han administration* (Cambridge, 1967), Vol. I, pp. 162f.

46 *HHS* 3, p. 145.

The third major way the government tried to aid peasants was through direct relief. Even in periods of general prosperity, it was recognized that people in certain categories – the elderly, widows, widowers, the childless, those seriously ill, and the poor with no means to support themselves – were in need of help. At least twenty-four times in Later Han, grants were made to persons in these categories, usually of two to five bushels (*shih*) of grain. But the government looked upon these groups as the kind of poor who would always be with them, a charge on public generosity. More important was the direct assistance extended when disaster struck those farmers who were usually self-sufficient. In the first fifty years of Later Han, only one recorded disaster occurred which could not be fully handled at the local level – an earthquake in Nan-yang in A.D. 46.[47] But from the time of the cattle epidemic in 76, the assistance of the central government was almost always needed somewhere. For the next fifty years the government was remarkably successful in coping with each crisis. Wang Ch'ung (A.D. 27–ca. 100), a caustic critic who was seldom generous or complimentary in his judgments, thought that no ancient ruler could have handled relief programs any better than the senior statesman Ti-wu Lun (fl. A.D. 40–85) had during the cattle epidemic.[48]

The magnitude of the difficulties involved in government programs to maintain the independence of peasants can be seen in the efforts made during the reign of Ho-ti (r. 88–106). The most serious problems to occur during the reign were locusts and drought in 92–93 and 96–97, floods in 98 and 100, and localized problems in the northwest and in Vietnam from 100 to 103.[49] Usually, at the first sign of trouble, orders were given to remit the land and straw tax for anyone who had suffered a loss of 40 percent or more of his crop and to give proportionate reductions for lesser losses. If the situation grew worse, granaries were opened in the commanderies to supply direct relief, and loans were made to those without enough to survive. Permission was periodically given to the poor (or sometimes specific groups of the poor) to hunt, fish, or gather food on public land without charge. At that time north China, especially between the Yellow River and the Yangtze, still contained numerous forests, streams, ponds, and marshes. When famine struck, people seem to have readily reverted to hunting, fishing, and gathering, probably regardless of imperial permission.

From time to time the government tried a new tack. In 94 an edict ordered that displaced persons should be excused from the land and labor

47 *HHS* 1B, p. 74.
48 *Lun-heng* 19 ("Hui-kuo"), pp. 838–39 (Alfred Forke, *Lun-heng: Part II, Miscellaneous essays of Wang Ch'ung* [Shanghai, 1911] pp. 211–12). 49 *HHS* 4, pp. 174–75, 182–83, 185–91.

service tax for one year if they would return to their homes. In the meantime they were to be given relief by the local authorities wherever they were, and if they engaged in peddling they were not to be taxed as merchants. In 101 the debts incurred by poor peasants for food and seed were canceled. Three years later, an edict ordered that poor people who owned fields but who because of "exhaustion of supplies" were not able to farm on their own were to be lent seeds and provisions.[50]

During this reign the government was able by these various means to cope with the distress of people suddenly reduced to destitution, thus keeping them from rebellion and getting them back to productive work as soon as possible. The country as a whole was not poor, nor was the government treasury depleted. Three times general tax reductions were ordered for all, regardless of need. These various disasters are never described as ruining the whole population of areas, and no mention is made of outright starvation. In fact, the record of relief measures in Ho-ti's reign should probably be taken as evidence of general prosperity, since the government was able to organize aid for victims of natural disasters in the far reaches of the country.

Such a situation was not stable, however. It was dependent on clement weather, good government management, and steady government income. If large groups of peasants were impoverished to a point where they could support themselves only in good years, becoming a burden on the state whenever harvests were poor, the treasury would quickly have been emptied. This is what appears to have happened after Ho-ti's reign. Relief measures become less complete, and tax remissions become less generous. The central government more frequently ordered local officials to handle disasters themselves without supplying the means for them to do so. In 143 government revenue was so depleted that it was necessary to reduce official stipends, prohibit the brewing of wine, and borrow a year's land tax from the kings and nobles. In 153, twenty commanderies and kingdoms suffered from locusts and the Yellow River flooded; the number of starving drifters on the roads at that time is said to have reached several hundred thousand. The government had little means of coping with this disaster. Local authorities were ordered to soothe and aid the starving, but they were not given the provisions they needed to do so. By 155 large-scale starvation was reported, and the central government had to instruct the local authorities to requisition 30 percent of their grain from whoever had any supplies in order to provide relief.[51]

What happened to the peasants reduced to destitution when government

50 *HHS* 4, pp. 178, 188, 192. 51 *HHS* 6, p. 273; *HHS* 7, pp. 299–300.

relief programs faltered? Many, whether they stayed in their native area or migrated elsewhere, seem to have subordinated themselves to large landowners. Ts'ui Shih, writing in perhaps 150, described this process with considerable sympathy.[52] Following current understandings, he traced the decline and impoverishment of small farmers back to the abandonment of the well field system, supposedly practiced in the golden past. The results of that abandonment included the accumulation of large fortunes by a few, who had thereby become able to support their own armed retainers and who imitated the mores of the rulers of the land. At the other end of the scale, men were forced into disposing of their wives and children for money as the only way to survive. As a remedy, Ts'ui Shih proposed that peasants be moved from areas of dense population where they could not make a living to areas where fertile land was left uncultivated.

The prosperity of large landowners

Despite the distress evident in the countryside in the second century and the increasing incidence of drifters, starvation, and unrest, agriculture in general does not appear to have been depressed. For the large landowner, this period seems to have been one of prosperity.

The wealth and satisfaction of the well-to-do are revealed not only in the descriptions of men like Ts'ui Shih; they are also suggested by archeology. Starting near the end of Former Han, the objects and decorations prepared for tombs took a new direction. Tombs began to contain models or pictures of what was needed to produce prosperity – a diversified agricultural estate, preferably one that had hunting areas. The more elaborate tombs in Later Han had chambers of brick or stone with decorations on the walls or vaults. Sometimes the stone was carved in relief; sometimes the bricks bore molded relief patterns; and sometimes one of its surfaces was plastered and painted. The scenes that were portrayed included historical and mythological personages, divine birds and animals, scenes from the career of the dead person, and in a significant number of cases, views of rural life.

A tomb dating from the first century A.D. found in P'ing-lu county in Shansi had a main chamber originally painted on all sides and the vault. What survives of these paintings includes a picture of hills, trees, birds, and animals, with a large, probably fortified, house. To one side a peasant is sowing with a seeding machine pulled by two oxen, a tool frequently mentioned in Han sources. Near him runs a stream or irrigation ditch,

52 *CHHW* 46, p. 10b.

with a man (probably an overseer) squatting beneath a tree holding a stick and looking at the person working.[53]

Even more detailed pictures survive from the large six-room tomb located in present Inner Mongolia of a man who had served there as a magistrate and military officer in the late second century. It contains more than fifty paintings, many of them labeled. The front room depicts the greatest glory of the occupant's official career: his various promotions and the processions that celebrated them. Then down both sides of the corridors on the central axis are further scenes of his official career: storehouses, layouts of the cities he ruled, and a few special incidents. The central chamber is largely devoted to another aspect of his life, his role as a cultivated gentleman who had studied with teachers, who was familiar with the great figures of the past and the mythology of his day, and who gave lavish entertainments with jugglers, musicians, dancers, and numerous servants in attendance. Attached to this central chamber is a small annex covered with pictures of kitchen activities, in a sense the support activities for the lavish entertainments. The rear chamber, farther away yet from the entrance, shows an even more private sphere of the life of the tomb occupant, his estate and his life at home. The pictures of the estate show hills and woods, a large house compound, wells, carriage sheds, a threshing ground, pens for cattle, sheep, and pigs, a stable for horses, and some chickens wandering around. Men are at work in a variety of tasks, some picking mulberry leaves, some plowing, some hoeing in vegetable plots. In two side chambers are scenes of plowing and the herding of horses, cattle, and sheep in large pastures.[54]

The importance of agricultural estates to general well-being is also seen in the pottery models found in many tombs, such as the four tombs believed to have been constructed for high officials of the Yang family, of Hung-nung, and datable to the latter part of Later Han. An inscription that was painted on at least four jars included in the tombs made a plea for the future well-being of the deceased persons and referred to an annual income from land tax of 20 million cash.[55] It is also of interest to note the extent to which agricultural estates and their needs feature among the funerary furnishings. Altogether there were models, in miniature, of eleven wells, two kitchen buildings, one watch tower, four storehouses, three mill

53 For pictures, see *Han T'ang pi-hua*, Plates 4–7. The full report of this tomb is in Shan-hsi sheng wen-wu kuan-li wei-yüan-hui, "Shan-hsi P'ing-lu Tsao-yüan-ts'un pi-hua Han-mu," *KK*, 1959.9, 462–63.

54 See Nei Meng-ku wen-wu kung-tso-tui, Nei Meng-ku po-wu-kuan, "Ho-lin-ko-erh fa-hsien i tso chung-yao ti Tung Han pi-hua mu," *WW*, 1974.1, 8–23; and Nei Meng-ku tzu-chih-ch'ü po-wu-kuan wen-wu kung-tso-tui, ed., *Ho-lin-ko-erh Han mu pi-hua* (Peking, 1978).

55 Ho-nan sheng po-wu-kuan, "Ling-pao Chang-wan Han mu," *WW*, 1975.11, 79f.

buildings, five pigsties, one sheep pen with four sheep, two pottery pigs and two stone pigs, six chickens, and four dogs.

From the almost universal use of these kinds of models in larger tombs, it would appear that agricultural estates were widely regarded as sources of both profit and pleasure. This view is also occasionally encountered in literary sources. Chang Heng (78–139) wrote a rhapsody (*fu*) extolling the glories of Nan-yang, his home area and the "old seat" of the Later Han imperial house. He described its geographical situation and natural resources, the kinds of trees, birds, and animals in its hills, the fish in its ponds and streams, the irrigated ricefields which produced different crops in winter and summer, the orchards, gardens, and grain fields.[56] Two generations later, Chung-ch'ang T'ung (ca. 180–220) expressed his firm preference for the quiet life of the country gentleman:[57]

> May I live in a place with good fields and an ample house, with hills to the back and facing a stream, surrounded by waterways, encircled by bamboo and trees. Let a threshing ground and vegetable gardens be in front and an orchard behind. May there be sufficient carriages and boats to relieve the tedium of walking and wading and enough servants to ease my four limbs from hard work. For nourishing my relatives, there should be fine foods. My wife and children should not have to suffer from any hard labor.

Despite the pleasure men of the period took in agricultural property, none of them has left a detailed description of the physical layout of an estate. The *Hou-Han shu* contains a few references to the size of landholdings of politically significant individuals. Some of Kuang-wu-ti's relatives in Nan-yang owned large estates. Fan Chung (fl. ca. 20 B.C.–20 A.D.), whose family had not produced any officials, held 300 *ch'ing* (3,400 acres); Yin Shih (d. A.D. 59), whose forebears had possessed 700 *ch'ing* (8,000 acres), was able to mobilize over a thousand men to fight in the civil war. Later in the first century, one of the kings was able to accumulate 800 *ch'ing* (9,000 acres) of private land in addition to his fief. Cheng T'ai (fl. 170–190) owned 400 *ch'ing* (4,500 acres) and used most of the income from it to entertain his followers.[58] However, according to figures given for 144, the average holding of cultivated land may be calculated at between 65 and 70 *mou* (7 or 8 acres) per household.[59] Probably anyone who possessed ten times the average, or half a dozen *ch'ing* (about 70 acres), would be con-

56 *CHHW* 53, pp. 7a–9b.
57 *HHS* 49, p. 1644. For Chung-ch'ang T'ung, see Balazs, "Political philosophy and social crisis," pp. 213–24.
58 *HHS* 32, pp. 1119, 1129, 1132; *HHS* 42, p. 1431; *HHS* 70, p. 2257.
59 For this calculation, see the figures cited, from an unspecified source, in the notes to *HHS* (tr.) 23, p. 3534. See also Chapter 10 above, Tables 15 and 16.

sidered a man of substance locally, and anyone with fifty or sixty times as much, like Cheng T'ai, a man of great wealth.

With regard to the organization of landholdings, tomb pictures depict continuous tracts of land, but it would be unwise to conclude that this was necessarily the usual system since allowance must be made for some degree of artistic license. In areas of sparse population where new lands had to be opened or developed, compact, continuous tracts of land probably were common. However, the process of division of property on inheritance among all the male heirs led to a constant division of every landed estate, and a compact holding was unlikely to survive beyond a few generations. The rural magnates were frequently associated with the process of land acquisition called *chien-ping* (absorption or annexation); by this means, those with wealth took over the land of those without, either through the legal means of purchase or debt foreclosure, or through bullying tactics.[60] Rural magnates are described as being quick to seize lands made profitable by irrigation projects or to take over areas of forest or swamp, most of which probably were not contiguous with their original holdings. At the same time, however, there is no reason to assume the existence of the highly fragmented pattern of plots characteristic of the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties.[61]

Large landownership per se did not especially trouble social critics of Later Han. Like their predecessors in Former Han times, they were concerned with the power that landowners acquired over those who worked the land. As seen above, Ts'ui Shih saw the personal humiliation in such a system. To Chung-ch'ang T'ung, the political implications were equally worrisome. The rich were more powerful than officials, and despite their lack of official rank could put to work a thousand households.[62]

The humble workers described by Ts'ui Shih and Chung-ch'ang T'ung may have been wage laborers or tenants who paid their landlord either fixed rents or shares of the crop. Considerable diversity must have existed between different regions and even between individual landowners. One fairly common system seems have been a kind of sharecropping in which the peasant received land and perhaps tools, oxen, and a house in exchange for

60 See Lien-sheng Yang, "Great families of the Eastern Han," in *Chinese social history*, ed. E-tu Zen Sun and John de Francis (Washington, D.C., 1956), esp. pp. 103–115.

61 A number of leaden strips, inscribed with the terms of a land contract, are sometimes quoted as evidence for the sale of land and its conditions. However, as many of these pieces are quite clearly forgeries, their evidence is not immediately acceptable for the dates which they bear. A genuine contract of 182, which is unfortunately not wholly legible or complete, appears painted on the walls of a tomb in Hopei (see Ho-pei sheng wen-hua-chü wen-wu kung-tso tui, *Wang-tu erh hao Han mu* [Peking, 1959], pp. 13, 20). For more general considerations of land-sale contracts, see Niida Noboru, *Chūgoku hōseishi kenkyū: Tochihō, torihikihō* (Tokyo, 1960), pp. 400–62; and A. F. P. Hulsewé, " 'Contracts' of the Han period," in *Il diritto in Cina*, ed. L. Lanciotti (Florence, 1978).

62 *HHS* 49, p. 1651.

one-half to two-thirds of his crop. This was the system the government itself used when it settled tenants on state-owned lands. There is little evidence of slaves being engaged in agricultural work in Later Han or of any legal restraints on tenant cultivators. As thete was a surplus of able-bodied peasants, there was no strong reason to keep in the service of the landowner those who thought they could better themselves by leaving.[63] Debts, however, may often have limited a tenant's ability to move.

Moreover, choosing to work another's land seems to have customarily involved accepting a social status analogous to that of a junior family member within the master's house; one received aid and protection, but was expected to be obedient, loyal, and ready to work together in the face of general threats. On small or medium-sized estates, the master may have acted as overseer, his sons helping in agricultural tasks, his wife and daughters working with the female servants in producing silk. Such a system is envisaged in Ts'ui Shih's manual; he had the sons engage in study only during lulls in farm work.[64]

SOCIAL HISTORY

Local social organization

Scholars approaching Han society from a variety of standpoints have perceived a major change in the organization of rural communities. In the pre-imperial period, relatively closed, often clan-based, socially and economically homogeneous village communities whose members cooperated in agricultural and other basic concerns are believed to have been the common form of local organization. Han men of letters from Tung Chung-shu to Ts'ui Shih and Chung-ch'ang T'ung shared this belief. Economic and political processes which started before Former Han are thought to have disrupted these village communities. Some modern scholars believe that the money economy created class differences that split apart the primitive, clan-based local communities. Others argue that the closed universe of the rural community was forced open by groups which bridged the boundaries of each community; these included merchants, refugees, migratory laborers, and rich families with connections to high society. To certain historians, this is seen as an entirely negative process, one in which village

63 On the subject of tenancy and land tenure in Later Han, see Hiranaka Reiji, "*T'ien-tsu* or land tax and its reduction and exemption in case of natural calamities in the Han petiod," *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Tōyō Bunko*, 31 (1973), 53–82; 32 (1974), 73–97; 33 (1975), 139–60, esp. Vol. I, pp. 69–81. See also Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp. 53–67; Tada Kensuke, "Go-Kan gōzoku no nōgyō keiei," *Rekishigaku kenkyū*, 286 (1964.3), 13–21.

64 *Ssu-min yüeh-ling*, pp. 9, 68 (Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp. 216, 226).

solidarity and equality were replaced by economic and social exploitation. To others, it seems a neutral, if not a positive development, resulting from the forces of economic advance and the political integration of the empire.[65]

In view of the great geographic diversity of Han China, variations in the speed with which old ways were changed are not surprising. In the areas where commercial and political development were greatest, in the densely populated great plain and along the major highways, a high degree of mobility appears to have existed, with workers moving about in search of employment, and merchants and officials bringing the latest ideas, techniques, and products. Because peasants could depend on the government to maintain good roads, a stable currency, law and order, and even relief programs, they could raise cash crops, enter commerce, and become craftsmen or wage laborers.

In spite of these social changes, kinship-based local groups (clans and lineages) seem to have remained common and influential throughout the Han period. These kin groups are most often mentioned in the histories when they caused trouble. An example is the great clan (*ta-hsing*) of Kung-sun in Pei-hai. In the reign of Kuang-wu-ti (A.D. 25–57), founder of the Later Han dynasty, Kung-sun Tan was appointed to be chancellor (*hsiang*) of Pei-hai kingdom. Soon afterward he ordered his son to murder a passer-by so that the corpse could be placed as a sacrifice in the foundations of his new house. When the governor had father and son both executed, over thirty of Kung-sun Tan's relatives and followers came armed to the chancellor's office in search of revenge.[66]

Most clans or lineages were probably less powerful locally than that of Kung-sun and hence presented less of a problem for the government. A rare glimpse of this type of local kin group is found in a stone inscription dated 160, in which Tuan Kuang relates that when he was assigned to a post in the home district of Sun-shu Ao, a famous official of Ch'u in the sixth century B.C., he saw Sun-shu in a dream. Greatly disturbed, Tuan then established a shrine to offer sacrifice to him and searched out his descendants to conduct the sacrifices. He discovered that there were three kinship groups (*tsung*) of Sun-shu in the area, each named after its place of residence.

65 Japanese scholars, who discuss this in terms of community or communal relations, almost all take these changes for granted. A brief discussion in English is found in Hiranaka, "Land tax," pp. 67–69. See also Chapter 10 above, pp. 547, 552. Extended analysis is provided by Yoshinami Takashi, *Shin Kan teikokushi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1978), pp. 33–36, 123–58. See also Masubuchi Tatsuo, *Chūgoku kodai no shakai to kokka* (Tokyo, 1960); Kawakatsu Yoshio, "Kanmatsu no rejisutansu undō," *TSK*, 25:4 (1967), 386–413; Goi Naohiro, "Go-Kan ōchō to gōzoku," pp. 403–44. Chinese scholars, using Marxist analysis, often write in similar ways. See Ho, *Han T'ang t'u-ti so-yu-chih*, pp. 131–211.

66 *HHS* 77, p. 2489. For further examples of unruly local kin groups, see Ch'ü T'ung-tsu, *Han social structure*, ed. Jack L. Dull (Seattle and London, 1972), pp. 455–59.

None included any educated members. Their tradition was that a descendant of Sun-shu Ao had served as governor under Former Han. His sons and grandsons all held local posts as subordinate officers. Then, during the last decade of Former Han, the family was massacred by bandits, leaving only three male cousins under ten years of age, none of whom had the resources to gain an education. The current kin groups had descended from these three boys, and since that time their members had been engaged in farming instead of study.[67]

However effectively strong centralized government had undermined local and kinship solidarity earlier in the Han period, by the second century A.D. the government no longer determined the main direction of development in local society. After 140 the government gradually lost its ability to provide relief; then to maintain order in particular areas; and finally to maintain order at all. Those villages and rural communities in which the older clan organization had remained comparatively unaffected by the social transformations brought into being by the Ch'in and Han state were sometimes able to continue much as before, unless they were in an area ravaged by heavy fighting and their people were thus forced to strengthen their ability to protect themselves. The more developed parts of rural society were more seriously jeopardized. Unable to reconstitute the old bonds of kinship and local community that had been broken in the preceding centuries, new forms of mutual protection had to be found.

After civil war broke out in 184,[68] the power of local religious associations became apparent to all. Starting perhaps in the 150s, several religious societies appeared in areas of north China where there was a dense population and considerable numbers of displaced persons. These societies stressed faith, honesty, and repentance. They offered faith healing and the hope that a "great peace" (*t'ai-p'ing*) would soon prevail and everyone would become as one family. In the Eastern Plain followers of the Way of the Great Peace (*t'ai-p'ing tao*) initiated a well-organized rebellion under a religious hierarchy and killed all the local officials they could find. Regular armies soon defeated them.[69]

In the west, far from the centers of authority, other religious groups managed to protect themselves from the worst of the violence of the period, even providing a haven for refugees. Chang Lu, head of the Five Pecks of Grain (*wu-tou-mi tao*) sect, was the effective ruler of Pa and Han-chung

67 *Li-shih* 3, pp. 4b–9b. 68 See Chapter 5 above, pp. 338f.; and Chapter 16 below, pp. 815f.

69 Howard Levy, "Yellow Turban religion and rebellion at the end of Han," *JAOS*, 76:4 (1956), 214–27; and R. A. Stein, "Remarques sur les mouvements du taoïsme politico-religieux au IIe siècle ap. J.C.," *TP*, 50 (1963), 1–78. For the religious and intellectual implications of these movements, see Chapter 16 below, pp. 815f.

commanderies (southern Shensi and northern Szechwan) from the 180s to 215. He administered the area through religious officials in a hierarchy of ranks. He set up charity houses, on the model of government post stations, but open to all and supplied with grain and meat. Travelers were expected to take what they needed; if they took more, evil spirits would make them sick. Aware of Chang Lu's influence, when Ts'ao Ts'ao defeated him in 215, he called him a man of good intentions and enfeoffed him and his five sons.[70]

In the less developed areas of southern China, peasants did not so frequently join religious associations, perhaps because community organization was still strong and formed a suitable basis for self-defense.[71] At some time toward the end of Later Han, one official appointed to Yü-chang (in Kiangsi) reported that government officials there had a difficult task:[72]

> In P'o-yang the common people's chiefs have set up separate clan units. They refuse entry to the soldiers and guard their borders. They would not receive the senior officials that the former governor Hua Tzu-yü sent, saying, "We have set up our own commandery and will wait until Han sends a fully appointed governor, whom it is appropriate to receive."

Suppression of these kinds of clans, referred to as "clan bandits" in the histories, was a major task of the Sun family in their efforts to consolidate control of the south in the last decades of the Han period.

The other common form of local organization to emerge in this period was a group composed not of peasants and their religious or kinship leaders, but of a local strong man and his followers; these often included kinsmen, but the groups do not seem to have been organized as a clan. When full-scale civil war broke out after 184, men all over the country began recruiting followers, forming alliances, and establishing private armies. Others led people into the mountains to seek refuge. Many of these men did not have to recruit an army from the beginning, already having under their control large numbers of "guests," "troops," "family soldiers," or kinsmen.

In some cases, these followers were the man's tenants and workers; in others, they appear to have been voluntary recruits to self-defense groups which had been formed in the preceding generation to deal with the breakdown of law and order and the recurrent peasant uprisings.[73] In

70 *SKC* 8 (Wei 8), pp. 263f. See also Chapter 5 above, p. 355.

71 On this subject, see T'ang Ch'ang-ju, *Wei-Chin Nan-pei-ch'ao shih lun ts'ung* (Peking, 1955), pp. 3–29; and a critique of this by Ho Ch'ang-ch'ün, "Kuan-yü tsung-tsu, tsung-pu ti shang-ch'üeh," *LSYC*, 1956.11, 89–100.

72 The passage is cited in the commentary to the *SKC* 49 (Wu 4), p. 1190, from the lost *Chiang-piao chuan*.

73 See Utsunomiya Kiyoyoshi, *Kandai shakai keizaishi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1955), pp. 443–50.

Szechwan when local rebels claiming connection with the Yellow Turbans defeated the official authorities, one subordinate officer mobilized several hundred of his family soldiers (*chia-ping*), then recruited over a thousand other men and was finally able to chase the rebels away. One man who joined Sun Ts'e (175–200) soon after the uprisings began brought with him a hundred "private guests" (*ssu-k'o*). Another, who joined Liu Piao (d. 208), brought with him several hundred retainers (*pu-ch'ü*) whom his elder brother earlier had recruited from the village.[74]

The Standard Histories reflect two views of these local leaders and the strength they commanded. In some instances, they earned the respect of their contemporaries for gathering together a loyal following and using it to administer a locality with justice, efficiency, and generosity.[75] If such men suppressed uprisings, they would be considered heroes. In other cases, however, they were recognized as being a threat to the effective control of authorized officials, who could be prevented from carrying out their normal duties of maintaining law and order or conscripting those who were liable for service.[76]

Although there are similarities between these associations of strong men and dependents and those which had appeared in the waning years of Wang Mang's reign, two important differences should be noted. The first is quantitative; at the end of Later Han, even men of no national significance are described as having not merely dozens, but hundreds or thousands of permanently attached retainers. Second, in the earlier case, the need for self-protection was relatively brief, lasting for less than a decade in most parts of the country. By contrast, once uprisings began to occur with regularity in the 140s and 150s, the level of political, administrative, and economic integration that marked the high points of Han was not regained until Sui and T'ang; forms of social organization that were based on the need for mutual protection and assistance in the absence of effective state control became a relatively permanent feature of this period.

Social stratification

Two types of criteria have been used to characterize an "upper class" of Later Han, the one based on Han categories of social honor, especially identification as a cultured gentleman (*shih*), the other on economic or

74 *SKC* (Shu 1) 31, p. 866; *SKC* 41 (Shu 11), p. 1007; and *SKC* 56 (Wu 11), p. 1309.

75 See, for example, *SKC* 11 (Wei 11), pp. 340–41, for the achievements of T'ien Ch'ou (169–214), who organized over five thousand families of refugees, getting their elders to agree to a code of twenty laws.

76 See *SKC* 12 (Wei 12), pp. 386–87, for attempts to prevent the arbitrary behavior of Liu Chieh, shortly before 220.

political power. Traditionally, Chinese historians used the term *shih* to refer to the leading elements in society, but this term has been avoided by most modern social and economic historians, on the grounds that the concept has little correspondence with reality, and that it implies a questionable moral superiority. Instead, they have used the term *hao-tsu* to refer to local landowners and other powerful persons as a social group.[77] Each way of distinguishing a privileged or dominant stratum has its advantages, but the various criteria should not be confused, since not all those recognized as cultured gentlemen can be classed as powerful landowners. Here, the term "upper class" will refer to those who considered themselves and were recognized by others as *shih*.

Social stratification underwent gradual change during the Later Han. At the lower levels of society, the most important developments are some of those already discussed in terms of the growth of large estates and the restructuring of local society. That is, many formerly independent commoners were compelled by economic necessity or the need for protection to become dependent tenants or retainers. Both in their own minds and the minds of others, such a step entailed a loss in social status.

The higher levels of society were also undergoing fundamental change. On the one hand, opportunities for rapid social mobility to the highest positions of prestige and power seem to have decreased. On the other, members of local elites were steadily incorporated into the nationwide upper class, the cultured gentleman or *shih*, so that in effect the upper class was greatly widened. Thus, while aspiring students in the Academy may have correctly felt that they had little chance of rising to become one of the ministers or senior statesmen, this decline in opportunity was only partly attributable to an increased rigidity in the system. It was also attributable to an increase in the numbers of men who considered themselves potential candidates for high office.

The concept of the educated gentleman, *shih*, was basic to ideas of status in Later Han. The term *shih*, from the time of Confucius at least, was used to refer to those qualified, morally and culturally, to be officers of the state. Included within its scope were teachers, unemployed gentlemen, and officials. Within the broad group of gentlemen there were recognized levels, marked by mastery of certain traditions, profession of certain values, and extent of leadership. In the early years of Later Han, Huan T'an (43 B.C.–A.D. 28) gave a succinct description of the hierarchy within the upper class, distinguishing five grades.

77 For these distinctions, see Yang, "Great Families"; Utsunomiya, *Kandai shakai keizaishi kenkyū*, pp. 405–72; Ho, *Han T'ang t'u-ti so-yu-chih*, pp. 166–211; Goi, "Go-Kan ōchō to gōzoku;" and Ch'ü, *Han social structure*, pp. 63–249.

The *shih* of the villages were distinguished by their care and diligence in family affairs; the *shih* of the county offices also had some mastery of literature; the *shih* of the commanderies were loyal to their superiors and fair as administrators; and the *shih* of the central government were broad-minded and talented scholars. Above all these *shih* were the *shih* of the whole empire, men whose talents greatly exceeded those of the populace, who had many ideas and farsighted policies, and who were capable of planning for the world and achieving great results.[78] Thus, according to Huan T'an's analysis, status as a gentleman depended on moral character, literary expertise, intelligence, and wisdom, and he seemed to assume that those with these attributes would gain the appropriate office.

All the features Huan T'an saw as qualifying one as a *shih* were essentially subjective. Acknowledgment as a *shih* depended therefore on the meaning given to terms such as filial, loyal, generous, and talented. Philosophical writings played some part in giving a meaning to these terms, but during Later Han the circulation of "exemplary lives" formed another, and perhaps more important, means of shaping people's understanding of these characteristics. These lives were biographies of individuals remembered not because of their contributions to the political or intellectual life of the country, but because they exemplified valued traits. Accounts of their experiences and actions provided dramatizations of the challenges and conflicting demands that faced gentlemen of the period, creating images and metaphors useful in interpreting their social and political situation. Ying Shao (d. ca. 204), in his *Feng-su t'ung-i* (Explanation of popular customs), discussed many of the biographical anecdotes in circulation among his contemporaries, usually in order to criticize what he took to be their messages about proper conduct. In several cases, the stories he recorded eventually appeared among the "exemplary lives" included in the *Hou-Han shu*.[79]

A good example of an exemplary life is the biography of Wang Tan in the *Hou-Han shu*. Wang Tan was the ideal "gentleman of the village." Living during the transition to Later Han, he inherited a considerable fortune, but lived at home and used much of it to help those in distress. Every year, at the busy times in the agricultural calendar, he would take wine and meat out to the fields in order to encourage the hard-working farmers and to shame the lazy ones. Under his influence, it is reported, the

78 *CHHW* 13, p. 5A. The surviving fragments of Huan T'an's writings are translated in Timoteus Pokora, *Hsin-lun (New treatise) and other writings by Huan T'an (43 B.C.–28 A.D.)* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1975). For the passage under reference, see pp. 15–16.

79 See *Feng-su t'ung-i*, ch. 3–5. For examples of biographies in *Hou-Han shu* that repeat stories found also in *Feng-su t'ung-i*, see *HHS* 53, pp. 1746–50; *HHS* 39, pp. 1294–95; and *Feng-su t'ung-i* 3, pp. 8a,b; 5, pp. 10b, 11a; and 4, pp. 11a,b.

entire village grew rich. He also reunited families and established rules for mourning. During the civil war (ca. A.D. 24), he led his kinsmen to contribute 2,000 bushels (*hu*) of grain to the army.[80]

Wang Tan's "life" helped to establish the meaning of paternalistic local leadership; another exemplary life expressed the related virtues of filial piety, loyalty, and sincerity. Yüeh Hui lived in the second half of the first century A.D. When his father, a county subordinate officer, was awaiting execution for some fault, Hui, then aged eleven, stood waiting at the gate until he finally moved the magistrate into granting a pardon. Later, when Hui was studying with a teacher and the teacher was arrested, Hui defended him. When the governor he worked for was executed, he was the only subordinate officer brave enough to undertake the funeral. When as the commandery chief clerk he selected men for office, he never showed favoritism, even selecting as "filial and incorrupt" the son of someone who had slandered him. Hui eventually held posts in the central government, but did not feel at home with the power-hungry and returned to his village. When Tou Hsien's influence became too great, he took poison, and several hundred disciples wore mourning for him.[81]

Criticisms of the social structure

When intellectuals complained about the social system in Later Han, they did not object to the model outlined by Huan T'an. Their objections were that this ideal system was not being achieved. Men of great talent and character could not participate in the higher circles of government; alternatively, men of inferior abilities had too much influence. Another complaint was that extraneous factors were also considered in judging men, particularly those of family or wealth. Wang Ch'ung (A.D. 27–ca. 100) and Wang Fu (ca. A.D. 90–165) both elaborated on these points.

From K'uai-chi in the southeast, Wang Ch'ung's great-grandfather had been a landowner and his grandfather a merchant. According to Wang, they had also been unruly local bullies, a tradition continued by Wang's father and uncle, with the result that the family twice had to move to escape its enemies. Wang Ch'ung's father began to teach him to read at six, and at eight sent him to school with over one hundred other boys. At one point in his essays, Wang Ch'ung asked rhetorically whether his ancestors' failure to gain a name for scholastic or literary attainments disqualified him from such achievements. In his answer, Wang argued that truly brilliant men appear individually, not as members of prominent families. But it is clear that many

80 *HHS* 27, pp. 930–31. 81 *HHS* 43, pp. 1477f.

of his contemporaries did not agree.[82] (He had solved the problem of having no books in his house by reading at the book shops in Lo-yang.)[83]

Three chapters of Wang's *Lun-heng* are on the subject of the relative value of Confucian scholars (*ju-sheng*) and functionaries (*wen-li*).[84] In Huan T'an's scheme, it was moral and intellectual qualities that established honor; official rank was only the appropriate concomitant. Yet according to Wang Ch'ung, most people honored only official position; they admired functionaries who were efficient but poorly educated, and felt disdain for Confucian scholars out of office, whom they viewed as inexperienced and impractical. Wang Ch'ung's description of the typical official is clearly cynical:[85]

> The functionaries in childhood become accustomed to brush and ink, but they do not recite the chapters and verses, nor even hear of benevolence and principle. When they grow up and become officials they manipulate words and use tricky techniques for their private benefit and to gain influence. They will accept bribes when they are making investigations; they will take what they can when they are in charge of the people. Having gained an honored position they seek power; as they gain power with the ruler, they sell out their chief. From the first day of office they wear new hats and sharp swords. After a year of service they will have appropriated fields and houses. It is not that their nature is bad; it is that their habitual practices are in opposition to the classical teachings.

To Wang Ch'ung, men trained in the classical precepts deserved much more honor than such officials.

Forty to fifty years later, Wang Fu was equally indignant. Although the moralists regularly extolled the poor but honest scholar, Wang Fu found that lack of wealth blocked advancement. He pointed to the general prejudice against the poor and the way others would misinterpret their every action as self-serving: "If they do not make calls they are considered arrogant; if they come several times, people think they are trying to get a meal." He also commented on the contemporary need for anyone who aspired to public life to be possessed of good connections with those who were wealthy or prominent; and he complained that as a result of such conditions, honest scholars were left in seclusion while crafty individuals gained considerable recognition of their achievements, thanks to their connections.[86] In another essay, Wang Fu wrote, "If one looks at what common gentlemen say, they take kinship to be virtue, rank to be worthiness." To him this was inadmissible:[87]

82 *Lun-heng* 30 ("Tzu-chi"), pp. 1196f. (Forke, *LH*, Vol. I, p. 80). 83 *HHS* 49, p. 1629.

84 *Lun-heng* 12 ("Ch'eng-ts'ai," "Liang-chih" and "Hsieh-tuan"), pp. 535–77 (Forke, *LH*, Vol. II, pp. 56–85). 85 *Lun-heng* 12 ("Ch'eng-ts'ai"), p. 547 (Forke, *LH*, Vol. II, p. 65).

86 *CFL* 8 ("Chiao-chi"), pp. 335, 337f.

87 *CFL* 1 ("Lun-jung"), pp. 34–35. For Tan, see Bernhard Karlgren, "The Book of documents," *BMFEA*, 22 (1950), 11.

TABLE 17

Family background of subjects with biographies in the Hou-Han shu

	Men known for political activities	Men known for literary accomplishments or exemplary character
Sons or grandsons of officials	88 (35%)	13 (11%)
A prominent family	48 (19%)	18 (15%)
Lower social status or impoverished	9 (4%)	12 (10%)
Nothing recorded	107 (42%)	77 (64%)

If kinship is the essential factor, then Tan should have succeeded to the throne and [the sage emperor] Shun should have been executed. . . . The goodness or evil of human beings is not always inherited in family lines.

Social mobility

From the *Hou-Han shu* it appears that there was considerable truth in the complaints of Wang Ch'ung and Wang Fu about the difficulties facing those who wished to rise to national power and prominence. The Standard Histories give the impression that most men who did attain prominence came from families that had been locally established for several generations, many having already produced an official. As shown in Table 17, of the 252 men given regular biographies (or biographies in the collective chapters on men known for their political achievements), over a third were sons or grandsons of officials. Apart from these, almost a fifth of the total were from families described in some way as being prominent, usually with a phrase such as "a prominent family of the commandery," or a family which had "produced officials for generations."

In most of the other biographies, nothing was recorded of the man's background; in only a handful of cases does the individual seem to have come from a family of distinctly lower social status or one which was so poor that to obtain an education he had to work. Even in the 120 brief exemplary biographies of men admired for their scholarship, character, literary abilities, or independence of mind,[88] there were only five who seem to have been genuine examples of upward social mobility. In this group and the politically active group there were other men described as poor, especially orphans, but often this poverty meant only that they had to

farm his own land or work for someone else, this was noted since it testified to his extraordinary determination.

The *Hou-Han shu* describes a few cases of extremely prolonged prominence or of extremely fast social rise. Wu Han (d. A.D. 44) came from a poor family and started his career in a low post in a county, but during the wars at the end of Wang Mang's reign, he attracted attention and rose to hold a high military post and noble title. Ti-wu Lun (fl. 40–85), one of the most respected senior statesmen of Later Han, was descended from a family of great eminence in the pre-Han period which had been forcibly moved to Ch'ang-an early in Han as a way of reducing its power. His closest relatives seem to have been insignificant, and he first attracted official attention by organizing resistance to an uprising, after which he was made a county official. When he felt he was getting nowhere, he left his official post and took up trade. Later he became an officer in Ch'ang-an and rose from then on.[89]

Despite exceptions like these, it was not to be expected that a man could rise to a high post from relatively low origins in the space of his own lifetime. During the late first century A.D., it was considered extraordinarily ambitious on the part of Yü Ching (who had served as a law clerk in his home county and commandery for sixty years) to hope that his descendants would rise significantly higher. Yü Ching reportedly said that Yü Ting-kuo (of a different Yü family), whose father was a county clerk, had risen to become chief minister, and therefore Yü Ching's own descendants might possibly rise as high as minister. This story was presumably included in the *Hou-Han shu* because Yü Ching's grandson Yü Hsü did indeed rise to be in charge of the secretariat.[90]

Cases of prolonged prominence are much more numerous in the histories. The man of letters and historian Ying Shao (d. ca. 204) was born into a family that had produced respected officials for six generations. The ancestors of Yang Hsü (142–189) for seven generations had been governors, ministers, or commandants. In seven generations the family of K'ung Yü (fl. 165) had produced fifty-three ministers and governors and seven marquises.[91] Moreover, in Later Han pedigree seems to have been accepted as a legitimate basis for making certain kinds of appointments. For 46 of the 110 years from A.D. 86 to 196, at least one of the three excellencies was a member of the Yang or the Yüan family. On a lesser level, during the whole of Later Han, a family of legal experts (the Kuo family of Ying-

89 *HHS* 18, pp. 675f.; *HHS* 41, pp. 1395–1403.
90 *HHS* 58, p. 1865. Yü Ting-kuo lived in the mid-first century B.C.; *HS* 71, pp. 3041f.
91 *HHS* 48, p. 1614; *HHS* 31, p. 1109; *HHS* 67, p. 2213.

ch'uan) produced seven superintendents of trials as well as numerous other legal officials.[92]

The *Hou-Han shu* also reveals that an intense desire to rise socially and politically, as in the case of Wang Fu, was common among those who had been exposed to the highest social and political circles. Anecdotes have been preserved of men going to extreme lengths to acquire reputations for filial piety or meticulous adherence to form in order to get the coveted recommendation as "filial and incorrupt" and thus procure entry into the regular civil service. That rare person who, knowing of the life of the great, still remained aloof from advancement was regarded with awe as almost superhuman.

Local elites

The upper class of the Later Han dynasty has been defined to include all those who viewed themselves as cultured gentlemen, who had received at least a minimal education, and who had acquired a familiarity with the rules of behavior. Sociologically, the most important distinctions within this upper class were based on the geographic scope of their activity. Some families for generations produced subordinate officers of the counties and commanderies; some for generations produced provincial officials; others for generations were active in the capital and served in the central government. But the divisions between these levels of activity were informal and could easily be crossed by those of talent or ambition.

Adequate description of the local elite – that part of the upper class active only at the county or commandery level – is difficult because local power structures and local elites interested historians and other intellectuals very little. Consequently, the bulk of Later Han sources present only a very partial view of this category. Men of local influence attracted the attention of those oriented toward the center usually because they abused their local power, frustrating the efforts of governors or magistrates to collect taxes or keep order. Little is said of the roles such men played in their own communities, despite the fact that for the bulk of the population, local elites were the only significant wielders of power.

Fortunately, several hundred inscriptions carved in stone survive from Later Han and offer a closer view of local society. These inscriptions were written for local purposes, to record events or achievements of significance to particular groups, communities, or families.[93] Many of them were writ-

92 *HHS* 46, pp. 1543–46. 93 Ebrey, "Later Han stone inscriptions."

ten by the gentlemen of a county to commemorate an excellent magistrate after he had been transferred elsewhere, or to mark the construction of a temple or bridge. Eleven of these county-level inscriptions include lists of the sponsors. For instance, the stele erected in honor of Liu Hsiung (second century), magistrate of Suan-tsao, included a long list of contributors, in this order: four retired regular officials, thirty-two retired provincial and commandery officers, twenty-five county officers (the former subordinates of the magistrate), fifteen honorary county officers, fifty-five gentlemen of leisure, and forty-three students.[94]

In this list, as in others, a large majority of the contributors to county projects were active and retired subordinates and "gentlemen of leisure." Although almost no one merited a biography in the *Hou-Han shu* for achievement as a local gentleman or low-ranking bureaucrat, some prominent men had relatives who liked such a life. A cousin of Ma Yüan (a famous general of the first generation of Later Han) liked the simple life of the gentleman who "ate plainly, had a slow carriage, served in the commandery as an officer or clerk, looked after the family tombs, and was praised as a good man by the community." In the late second century three brothers, members of the famous Yüan family and the nephews of two senior statesmen, preferred to stay out of capital politics, choosing, respectively, the life of the reclusive village gentleman, the scholar, and the commandery subordinate officer.[95]

From the inscriptions, it appears that many men felt pride in their positions as local gentlemen or subordinate officers and were eager that a record of their accomplishments and merits should be preserved. Nevertheless, they also observed an internal hierarchy. In most inscriptions, subordinate officers distinguished themselves not merely from regular officials above them and unemployed gentlemen below them, but divided themselves into two levels, those who served under the governor or inspector, and those who served under the magistrate. This distinction seems to have been an important one. Commandery subordinate officers were on a low rung of a ladder which led up to the central government; county subordinate officers were not.

Many of the men given biographies in the *Hou-Han shu* and most of those whose epitaphs have survived began their careers as commandery subordinate officers. Inscriptions sometimes list all the posts held in succession. For instance, Wu Jung (d. ca. 168), after finishing his studies, served the province as clerk (*shu-tso*); he then served the commandery as bureau clerk (*ts'ao-shih*), master of records (*chu-pu*), investigator (*tu-yu*), officer of

94 *Li-shih* 5, pp. 15b–23a. 95 *HHS* 24, p. 838; *HHS* 45, pp. 1525–27.

the five bureaus (*wu-kuan yüan*), and acting aide-de-camp (*shou ts'ung-shih*) in the bureau of merit (*kung-ts'ao),* before being recommended as "filial and incorrupt" at the age of thirty-six.[96] Moreover, within the same family some men might rise to be no higher than commandery or province subordinate officer while others became regular officials.

County subordinate officers were often drawn from a lower social stratum. The stelae provide no cases of those who served (or admitted serving) in county subordinate posts and then rose higher; nor are there cases of men who became commandery subordinates or regular officials and admitted that their father or grandfather had been county subordinate officers. When the *Hou-Han shu* describes such cases, some unusual circumstance was generally involved. The most common reason for a county subordinate to rise was that he showed military talent when the areas under his jurisdiction were attacked. The majority of such instances date from the first or the last years of the dynasty, when warfare was prevalent and capable officers were in high demand.

In cases where military talent was not a factor, personal ambition played a dominant part. A case in point is the famous scholar Cheng Hsüan (127–200), who served as a county subordinate officer when young. In his father's eyes this post was suitable enough, and Cheng Hsüan's preference for study was unreasonable. Yet his father's disapproval could not deter Cheng Hsüan's scholarly aspirations, and he eventually quit the post to continue his education in the capital.[97] Thus, if social mobility is viewed from the perspective of members of the local elite (rather than that of men of letters such as Wang Fu and Wang Ch'ung), the crucial step was that of rising beyond the county. For the man who wished to remain at home for his whole life, county positions were fine; for those with ambition toward higher circles, it was best to seek a position as a commandery subordinate or even to travel to the capital to finish one's education and meet important people.

All our sources reveal the importance of kinship relations in local society. As mentioned earlier, the *Hou-Han shu* refers to great clans or famous lineages of commanderies or counties. Men renowned for their generosity and deference are repeatedly described as giving away wealth to their local kinsmen. From the *Hou-Han shu*, however, it is usually unclear whether local kin groups as a whole belonged to the local elite or whether only a few of their members did, the others being ordinary commoners. Stone inscriptions show that in many cases numerous men of the same surname or lineage were active in county affairs. The clearest case is found in the two

96 *Li-shih* 12, pp. 7b–8a. 97 *HHS* 35, p. 1207.

accounts of the efforts of the Chung kinsmen to repair the shrines for the mythical sage emperor Yao and his mother.[98]

No member of the Chung family from Ch'eng-yang has a biography in the *Hou-Han shu*, but in the mid-second century the family included a retired minister who organized his kinsmen, "both poor and rich," to join in these enterprises. Contributions were made by four regular officials, six provincial and commandery subordinate officers, nineteen county subordinate officers, and one youth. Thus the Chung included many poor families who could contribute only labor, but also at least twenty-nine adult men who had some form of official status; two-thirds of those, however, were at the county level, where they could probably obtain posts simply by application.

Inscriptions for civic purposes seldom specify the kinship relations between men, but sometimes there are so many men of the same surname that some kinship connection can reasonably be inferred. For instance, of the forty-one men listed as sponsors of a stele erected in 186 to honor a magistrate who was being transferred, twenty-six were surnamed Wei and twelve were named Fan.[99] Altogether there are eleven such lists of sponsors of projects undertaken at a county level, and in all but two of them at least one family name recurred frequently; in four of them one name accounted for over 20 percent of those listed. Each of the three lists that have over a hundred names show evidence of the local coexistence both of several prominent family names and also of officials, subordinates, and nonofficials of the same name. For instance, among the 157 sponsors of a stele erected in 185 to honor a magistrate, there were twenty-four men named Li, fourteen named Su, and thirteen named Yin.[100] The presence of officials, subordinate officers, and nonofficials in four local kin groups is suggested by the figures in Table 18.[101]

Patron-client relations among the upper class

Much of the social life of the upper class in Later Han was colored by the patron-client relations that tied men hierarchically to superiors and inferiors. Clients were of two principal types.[102] A class of "former subordinates" was created every time one man was appointed or recommended to office by another. A few high officials in the central government had a large number

98 *Li-shih* 1, pp. 1a–4a, 8a–13a.

99 *Liang-Han chin-shih chi* 12, pp. 1a–7b.

100 *Liang-Han chin-shih chi* 11, pp. 11a–17b.

101 From the three sponsor lists, which each include over a hundred names, only those individuals with the names Su, Yin, Shen, and T'ien are listed here. In so far as these names were less common than Li, Yang, Wang, and Chang, which are excluded here, they are more likely to be true relatives.

102 For more detail, see Patricia Ebrey, "Patron-client relations in the Later Han," *JAOS*, 103:3 (1983), 533–42.

TABLE 18

Official status of presumed relatives on county sponsor lists

Name	Regular officials	Commandery and provincial subordinates	County subordinates	Nonofficials
Su	1	3	4	6
Yin	0	2	3	8
Shen	—	—	12	0
T'ien	0	1	6	20

Sources: Li-shih 2, pp. 14a–21a; 5, pp. 15a–22a; 9, pp. 12b–18a.

of staff positions which they could fill with men of their own choosing. Governors, regional inspectors, and magistrates also could appoint dozens of subordinates. The governor in particular played a crucial role, since he was the one who recommended local men as "filial and incorrupt" and was thus able to form bonds of obligation with men who might well later rise high in the bureaucracy. The second type of client was called student (*men-sheng*). In theory these men lay under an obligation to the patron because they had received instruction from him. The patron might be a genuine teacher, but regular officials also acquired student clients who came to them less for instruction than for assistance and protection.

During the second century, relationships between patrons and clients gained increasingly greater political significance. This development was perhaps one aspect of a general trend whereby private ties and institutions came to assume greater importance, while official and public connections were being taken less seriously. The process was perhaps related to the new place that the virtues of filial piety and communal solidarity had been accorded in the scale of human values. Just as a man was expected to remain loyal to his kin and his neighbors, so was he supposed to remember his former teachers and superiors.

Patronage was given ever greater importance by the changes in political life, especially by the rise of consort families to positions of great power after A.D. 89. The power exercised by regents from consort families rested largely on their control of the appointment of hundreds of officials. Even though some regents from consort families made conscientious efforts to recruit respected men, not unreasonably the men they appointed remained suspect and were usually expelled from their offices as soon as their patron's consort family was overthrown. With the consolidation of power by the Liang family in the 140s, many officials and intellectual leaders came to believe that political decisions were not being made in their favor. In

attempting to find ways to make their influence felt more strongly, they took to strengthening their own patron-client ties. This was first evident in the Academy, where under the leadership of a few active teachers, the students began to protest against the mistreatment of officials.

As emphasis on patron-client relations grew, competition for the most desirable clients resulted. According to Hsü Kan (171–218), "Ministers, counsellors, regional inspectors, and governors of commanderies paid no attention to royal affairs, concentrating on their 'guests.' "[103] Men important enough to have biographies in the *Hou-Han shu* almost all had at some time in their career declined appointments from their local commandery or recommendations from high capital officials. It was not that holding such posts carried a stigma; rather, men wanted to pick and choose which assignments to accept, and to assume relations with their superiors on a voluntary basis.

One duty accepted by every client was to mourn for his patron when he died, attending the funeral if at all possible. Not infrequently, the clients afterward contributed toward having a stone monument erected. The stele for the inspector of Chi province, who died in 161, listed 193 "students," all from areas under his jurisdiction. The stele for K'ung Chou (104–164), commandant of T'ai-shan, was erected by forty-three student clients from ten different commanderies; four subordinates from his previous post; four subordinates from his service in T'ai-shan; ten disciples from eight commanderies, presumably genuine students; and one "former commoner." The stele for Liu K'uan (120–185), a senior statesman, gives the names of over three hundred student clients from all over north-central China, ninety-six of whom were at the time officials, including thirty-five magistrates and eleven governors. A separate stone had a list of his "former subordinates"; this bore more than fifty names, ranging from the very highest officials downward.[104]

From these lists we can see the ways in which networks were formed. Gentlemen could attach themselves to any of the local officials in their own or nearby areas, becoming their student clients or their subordinate officers. These officials in turn not only had official and personal contact with their superiors, but also had personal relations with other regular officials, especially their former superiors or patrons, some of whom in turn were probably connected with leading figures at court. At the funerals of higher officials or great teachers, several thousand clients might assemble, strengthening their ties with each other. At the height of the mania for

103 *Chung-lun* B, p. 23.
104 *Li-shih* 7, pp. 1a–2b, 4a–7b; *Li-shih* 11, pp. 1a–6a. *Li-hsü* 12, pp. 5b–18b, 18b–21b.

patron-client relations, men might even wear mourning for the mother of a man who had been their governor for only a matter of days.[105]

Increasing coherence and self-consciousness of the upper class

One of the major contributions of the Han period to Chinese history was the enlargement of the group of people who considered themselves gentlemen (*shih*). Members of local elites began to think of themselves as cultured gentlemen even if of modest attainment. Despite their geographic separation and the local focus of most of their activities, they came to see themselves not merely in terms of their own community, but also as participants, even if very indirectly, in national literary, scholarly, and political affairs.[106] In the succeeding centuries, the strength and coherence of the upper class of "cultured gentlemen" proved to be more durable than political or economic centralization as a basis for the unity of Chinese civilization.

Stone inscriptions erected to honor members of the local elite show how the ideal of the gentleman was spreading. These inscriptions show that the values expressed in "exemplary lives" – filial piety, deference, indifference to personal advancement – were shared by members of the local elites. Inscriptions do not, of course, indicate that men practiced all the virtues of the cultured gentleman, but they do show that they shared a consciousness of how a gentleman was supposed to act. A good example is a funerary stele dated 182, which seems to have been composed by a principal subject himself.[107]

> In his youth [Mr. K'ung] studied the *Classic of ritual*. When he encountered a period of general hardship, in which people took to eating human flesh, he made a hut of dirt and thatch and wore himself out gathering wild vegetables to feed his parents. He was kind, benevolent, straightforward, quiet, and faithful, all virtues which were part of his nature, not ones acquired by learning. [Later] he prospered a little and he called to mind his grandmother. . . . He refashioned her coffin, built a temple and planted cypress trees around it. . . . His youngest brother . . . was rich in virtue but poor in worldly goods. [Mr. K'ung] invited him to live with him for over forty years. Even when he had to borrow money himself, he was generous to his brother. . . . His fame spread widely, and the county asked him to be master of records (*chu-pu*), then to serve in the bureau of merit (*kung-ts'ao*). . . .

Thus a man who counted no officials among his ancestors and whose own official experience was simply that of a county subordinate claimed honor

105 *Feng-su t'ung-i* 3, p. 2b.

106 This subject is discussed from the point of view of intellectual history in Yü Ying-shih, "Han-Chin chih chi shih chih hsin tzu-chüeh yü hsin ssu-ch'ao," *Hsin-ya hsüeh-pao*, 4:1 (1959), 25–144.

107 *Li-shih* 5, pp. 5a–7a.

because he had fulfilled several times over the duties of filial piety and generosity.

Sometimes the local elite publicly took pride that their ranks included a man with these qualities. Fifty-eight men in Nan-yang, all former subordinate officers or gentlemen of leisure, contributed to the stele for a local scholar and teacher, Lou Shou (97–174). Lou's grandfather had been a regular official, but his father had lived "contented in poverty." Lou Shou himself was described as loving study, and as a warm person who got along well with others but remained respectful. He enjoyed the life of the recluse and the mist in the mountains and did not curry favor with powerful people. He refused all offers from the county or commandery, unmoved by thought of rank and stipend.[108]

Education was certainly a major way in which the ideal of the cultured gentleman spread. Conscientious officials are often described as inspiring the local people to cultivate refined behavior and learning. For instance, Ho Ch'ang, while a governor, tried to convert the local subordinate officers into gentlemen. Instead of taking a narrowly legal view, he decided lawsuits according to the principles of the *Spring and autumn annals*. Under his influence, "those who had left home all returned to care for their parents or carry out funerals and mourning. Over two hundred people gave away part of their property." It is interesting to note that Ho Ch'ang was not bringing culture to a remote area of the country, but to a marginal group in a very central area, Ju-nan.

Other officials put greater stress on classical studies. Near the end of Han, when Ling-hu Shao was governor of Hung-nung, there was no one there who was familiar with the classics (despite recent attempts at dissemination, such as engraving of the texts on stone tablets in A.D. 175). He therefore recruited one of the subordinate officers to study with a teacher in a nearby commandery, and after he had gained a rudimentary knowledge, set him up as a teacher. Other governors sent promising men to the capital to study. For instance, when Yang Chung (d. A.D. 100) was thirteen and a low clerk in a commandery in Szechwan, the governor was impressed with his ability and sent him to the capital.[109]

Whatever credit was due to diligent magistrates and governors, a passion for studying seems to have persisted through Later Han. The rewards were great. Socially, formal study with a teacher marked one as a cultured gentleman; politically, it opened the door to official appointment. Throughout the country professional scholars and officials offered instruc-

108 *Li-shih* 9, pp. 9a–12a.
109 *HHS* 43, p. 1487; *HHS* 48, p. 1597, *SKC* 16 (Wei 16), p. 514 (see P'ei Sung-chih's note).

tion. There are more than a dozen references in the *Hou-Han shu* to teachers who had over a thousand students, and many more references to those who had several hundred. Stories of talented orphans who were able to find teachers despite their inability to pay recur several times in the Standard Histories. These stories were recorded to provide inspiration, but they also reveal the significance learning had acquired in public life.[110]

The self-consciousness of the upper class was further increased through literary works which criticized and evaluated gentlemen either as individuals or as groups. These books followed some of the conventions of the "exemplary lives" which had been popular through Later Han, but they seem to represent a more self-conscious and sophisticated stage. An early example is an essay by K'ung Jung (d. 208), which compared the merits of the gentlemen of Ying-ch'uan and Ju-nan, two areas that produced many leading figures in the partisan movement. What survives of K'ung's essay consists of statements such as the following:[111]

> Ying Shih-shu of Ju-nan could take in five columns of a book at sight. Although many of the gentlemen of Ying-ch'uan are brilliant, none are able, like Li Lou [of antiquity], to look at several things at once.

or

> When Yüan Kung-chu of Ju-nan passed in the first class and became a palace gentleman, he submitted a memorial stating his desire to put Liang Chi on trial. The gentlemen of Ying-ch'uan may love to give loyal remonstrances, but there has been no one who was able to sacrifice his life to speak forthrightly.

Not only did men comment on the gentlemen of their age or region, they also compiled biographies of them. One of the first to put together a collection of such biographies was Chao Ch'i, who had been under ban during the persecution of the partisans.[112] When the ban was lifted because of the rebellions, he took a military command, dying in 201 at over ninety years of age. His book, called *Evaluative records of the San-fu area*, consisted of biographies of men of his home area, the three commanderies around Ch'ang-an, during Later Han. He summed up the gentlemen of his area in these words: "They love the lofty and honor principle, and are noble in both name and reality, but when customs deteriorate they chase after power and think only of profit."[113]

A younger contemporary named Wang Ts'an (177–217) wrote a book

110 For the establishment of institutions of learning, see Chapter 14 below, pp. 756f.

111 *CHHW* 83, pp. 10b–11a.

112 See Chapter 5 above, pp. 327f.

113 The work (*San-fu chüeh-lu*) is now lost, apart from citations which appear, for example, in the notes to *Hou-Han shu*. See *HHS* 64, p. 2124 for authorship, p. 2125 for the passage from the book's preface that is quoted here.

that also enjoyed wide popularity, called *A record of the heroes of the end of the Han*. Such collective biographies continued to be written in considerable numbers for the next century.[114]

One of the most important elements in the evolution of the upper class was the partisan movement of the 150s–170s. Men with widely differing origins responded to the leadership of the partisans because they were already self-conscious of being gentlemen and thus responsible for the moral guidance of the country. Yet the result of this political agitation, the persecution of the partisans from 166 to 184, undoubtedly increased the self-consciousness of these men. Above all, it created a large body of articulate, energetic, politically interested men who could not hold office. The social status of cultured gentlemen (*shih*) could no longer be defined in terms of personal characteristics and corresponding political activity. Many men of the highest social position, including the leaders of the protest movement, did not hold office and could not look upon themselves as members of a government organization. Their sole surviving role was social and cultural, as the leaders of their communities and upholders of the values that had been fostered in them.

In theory, once deprived of office the agitators should have been rendered powerless; being disgraced in the eyes of the central government, their sphere of influence should have been sharply constricted to that of their home towns. Yet this did not occur. The partisans maintained their contacts all over the country without the mediation of official relations. Even if the "cultured gentlemen" had not fully understood their independence from the government before, it now became obvious to all.

The date 220, the end of Han, does not mark any shift in the direction of social and economic trends. But it is a useful date from which to survey the changes that had occurred in the past two centuries because the new rulers of north China, Ts'ao Ts'ao (155–220) and his son Ts'ao P'i (186–226), adopted policies that gave formal recognition to changes in the structure of society. Two major changes are suggested in this chapter: first, a restructuring of local society and agricultural production; and second, the widening and strengthening of the upper class as a social group with a political and social significance independent of any offices its members might fill.

114 For Wang Ts'an, see *SKC* 21 (Wei 21), p. 597f. None of these late Han works survives in its entirety, but passages from them are extensively quoted in other sources, especially the commentaries to the *San-kuo chih* by P'ei Sung-chih and the commentary to the *Shih-shuo hsin-yü* by Liu Chün; for citations from the *Ying-hsiung chi*, see *HHS* 74A, p. 2373, note 1; p. 2374, note 2; p. 2375, note 3; for a citation from the *Han-mo ming shih lu*, see *HHS* 74A, p. 2376, note 2. For the *San-kuo chih*, see Rafe de Crespigny, *The records of the Three Kingdoms* (Canberra, 1970); for *Shih-shuo hsin-yü* see Richard B. Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü: A new account of tales of the world* (Minneapolis, 1976).

Ts'ao Ts'ao dealt with the changed social basis of agriculture by establishing large agricultural garrisons (*t'un-t'ien*). This system acknowledged two developments. The first was that poor peasants were unwilling or unable to return to devastated land and to survive on their own. Needing the protection of those who commanded social, economic, and political power, they had to part with some of their earnings and give up much of their freedom in return for security or the illusion of security. To restore agricultural production quickly to prewarfare levels, Ts'ao Ts'ao had either to encourage landlords to bring their dependents with them to settle on deserted land, or to use the power of government to collect the landless peasants, organize them into groups, and settle them as state dependents. He took both courses. Li Tien (fl. 190–210), a man with over three thousand dependent kinsmen and followers, was encouraged to settle on abandoned land in southern Hopei.[115] In other areas, the settlers were semi-demobilized soldiers, assigned there by the government.

The second development which gave rise to this policy of settlement was the government's need to raise revenue beyond that collected through per capita taxes. To ignore the economic and social strength of large estate owners who could resist paying taxes in full, while placing most of the tax burden on individual peasants, would simply have meant loss of revenue. Instead, Ts'ao Ts'ao imitated the estate owners, gaining his income, as they did, through the employment of tenants and dependents. Thus, even if the magnates could not be fully controlled and their wealth and landed property lay beyond the tax collectors' reach, the government could still derive steady revenues from its "colony fields."[116]

Ts'ao Ts'ao and Ts'ao P'i took into account the changes in the structure of the upper class by reforming the system of recruitment to office. The new system was called the nine-rank system, and later became known for its aristocratic bias, which gave great advantages to men from high-ranking families. In the beginning, however, it seems to have been a concession to the autonomy of the upper class. The consensus of local public opinion about individuals was recognized as an appropriate basis on which to select men for office.[117] In each county and commandery, a local man of high repute was charged with ranking local gentlemen according to their reputation for talent and integrity. The government was to follow these rankings in appointing men to office, thus implicitly acknowledging that the upper

115 *SKC* 18 (Wei 18), pp. 533–34.
116 On this policy, see Mark Elvin, *The pattern of the Chinese past* (London, 1973), pp. 35–41.
117 On this institution, see Donald Holzman, "Les débuts du système médiéval de choix et de classement des fonctionnaires: Les neuf catégories et l'Impartial et Juste," *Mélanges publiés par l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises*, 1 (Paris, 1957), 387–414.

class recruited and certified itself. For the previous half-century and more, the behavior of officials at all levels had been kept within certain bounds by their fear of earning the ridicule of leading literati and cultured gentlemen. Under the nine-rank system, the legitimacy of their judgments was recognized, but they were at the same time given the responsibility of selecting candidates who would not be subject to criticism once they held important posts.

CHAPTER 12

THE RELIGIOUS AND INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND

LITERARY SOURCES AND CLASSIFICATION SCHEMES

Although the historical and other texts include a variety of information concerning religious belief and intellectual developments during the Ch'in and Han periods, there is no definitive or systematic statement of a creed or a philosophical theory that permits a comprehensive analysis. Above all, there is no statement of many of the assumptions that were generally accepted and may be regarded as forming the background against which a number of writers and thinkers worked. However, we are fortunate that a number of texts, which derive from authors of different persuasions and which were compiled at varying intervals during the four centuries of the period, survive. Frequently enough, chapters of these works touch on the same problem or subject; where writers of opposing points of view appear to be acting on the same assumptions, these can probably be regarded as valid. A further valuable asset lies in the extent of critical comment that has survived, insofar as recurring protest or argument against certain views or practices testifies to their prevalence, provided that due allowance is made for the convictions and prejudices that motivated a writer to set down his thoughts.[1]

The Ch'in and Han periods lacked a compelling intellectual personality or force comparable with, say, Confucius or Chu Hsi, or if we may turn elsewhere for a moment, Plato or Aristotle. But the fortunate preservation of a list of books that had been formed into the imperial collection at the beginning of the Christian era shows that a large body of writings existed at that time together with a considerable number of writers, even though only a small proportion of the works, estimated at less than a quarter, has survived.[2] Perhaps the most informative and comprehensive writings of the period on which we may call include the *Huai-nan-tzu* (completed 139

1 For a general account of the intellectual development of this period, see Wing-tsit Chan, *A source book in Chinese philosophy* (Princeton and London, 1963); Hsü Fu-kuan, *Liang Han ssu-hsiang shih* (Taipei, 1976); and Kung-chuan Hsiao, *A history of Chinese political thought*, Vol. I. *From the beginnings to the sixth century* A.D., trans. Frederick W. Mote (Princeton, 1979).

2 See Chapter 1 above, pp. 70f.

B.C.), the memorials of Tung Chung-shu (ca. 179–ca. 104 B.C.) that are incorporated in the *Han shu*, the *Lun-heng* of Wang Ch'ung (27–ca. 100 B.C.), and the works of a few men such as Wang Fu (ca. 90–ca. 165) and Hsün Yüeh (148–209) toward the close of the Han period.

For a number of reasons, we must beware of assuming that literature exerted a very great influence on the development of the Chinese people at this time. It was during these centuries that the Chinese script was being standardized and simplified to reach the form that has been in general use until recently; comparison of manuscripts dating from the Ch'in period with those from the second century A.D. illustrates the development of this process. Nevertheless, books were neither easily read by the public nor widely circulated.

The materials used for writing varied. Silk, an expensive item, was used for special copies, as may be suggested from surviving examples found in tombs. From the same source, and from rubbish pits left behind by civil and military officials, we possess a growing volume of examples of texts written on the normal form of stationery at this period, strips of wood or bamboo. A form of protopaper had evolved and was made known to the Han government, traditionally by Ts'ai Lun in A.D. 105; but despite the possibility that some finds of this substance date from earlier times, it is unlikely that paper came into general use before the third or fourth centuries A.D.[3]

The books that formed the imperial collection at the beginning of the Christian era were probably not in general circulation, and we cannot even assume that copies were available to those who would be interested enough to seek them. The collection of books and the list of which we now have a digest were formed as a direct result of imperial orders to assemble copies of texts from all parts of the empire. From those copies, whether they were complete or partial, an approved version was compiled and deposited in the imperial library. Occasionally we hear of a work of which more than one copy was made at the outset, such as the *Shih-chi*. But here again there is no certainty that such a work was available generally or in its entirety for long. For example, there are indications that during the second, third, and fourth centuries A.D. there was no immediate access to those portions of the *Shih-chi* that concerned the Han period.[4]

3 See Tsien Tsuen-hsuin, *Written on bamboo and silk: The beginnings of Chinese books and inscriptions* (Chicago and London, 1962), pp. 131f. For a recent summary of the evidence for the manufacture of paper before the time of Ts'ai Lun, see Wang Chü-hua and Li Yü-hua, "Ts'ung chi chung Han chih ti fen-hsi chien-ting shih lun wo-kuo tsao chih shu ti fa-ming," *WW*, 1980.1, 78–85.

4 For Wang Ch'ung's difficulty in finding books, see Chapter 11, pp. 633–34. For the circulation of the *Shih-chi*, see *Han shu* 62, p. 2737. *Shih-chi* 130, pp. 3319–20, carries the statement of how two copies of the work were disposed. See A. F. P. Hulsewé, "The problem of the authenticity of *Shih-chi* ch. 123, the memoir on Ta Yüan," *TP*, 61:1–3 (1975), 86–87.

As against the literary losses that are known to have taken place since the compilation of the list, it is now becoming possible to recover a few texts of material hitherto unknown, as archeologists continue the successful excavation of tombs in many different parts of China. Highly valuable unique copies of a variety of material have come to light in recent years, including works of literature, philosophy, and history; technical manuals concerning subjects such as medicine, astronomy, and divination; and administrative and legal documents. Besides these additions to the received corpus of Chinese writings, the tombs have also yielded copies of some books that have survived to our time, such as the *Analects of Confucius*, the *Book of changes*, and the *Tao-te ching*. Such manuscript copies corroborate the accuracy of the received versions to a degree that is both surprising and comforting.

There is no means of measuring the extent of literacy in Ch'in and Han, but we are probably safe in assuming that it cannot have been very high. In general, the content of Chinese writings at this time, as later, concerned the lives, practices, and enjoyments of the privileged members of society. For example, detailed prescriptions survive for some of the correct procedures to be followed at religious ceremonies of state, but there remains little on the conduct of popular religion, other than what can be gleaned from comment or criticism.

As far as we can tell, the list of writings now incorporated as chapter 30 of the *Han shu* was based on a classification that had been specially made for the purpose, probably by Liu Hsiang or his son Liu Hsin.[5] The categories include, in very general terms: (1) classical works and their commentaries, together with books associated with the teaching of Confucius and some manuals used in elementary education; (2) precepts and essays of the masters, subdivided into a number of groups; (3) poetry, including the main genres of *shih* and *fu*; (4) manuals on military strategy and tactics; (5) texts concerning religious, esoteric, or cosmological matters, such as almanacs, works on astrocalendrical science, divination, *yin-yang*, and the Five Phases; and (6) medical matters and the lore of the Yellow Emperor.

For better or worse, this pioneer work affected all subsequent Chinese bibliographical projects. It imposed its scheme on the views that have been taken of literature, and it drew distinctions that were thought to be of paramount importance at one of the formative stages of Chinese literary and cultural development. However, the list compiled by Liu Hsiang and Liu Hsin left as its legacy a classification of Chinese philosophy in major divisions that has often been misleading. The distinctions that the list drew

5 For the construction of this list, see P. van der Loon, "On the transmission of Kuan-tzu," *TP*, 41:4–5 (1952), 358f.

among various philosophical schools were partly based on, and partly extended, the discrimination made by Ssu-man T'an (d. 110 B.C.) among the six schools of *yin-yang*, *ju-chia* (Confucianists), *Mo-chia* (Mohists), *ming-chia* (Nominalists), *fa-chia* (Legalists), and *Tao-te* (Taoists).[6] However, it is of some importance to note that these distinctions were by no means rigorous at the time, as it is doubtful how far Ch'in or Han thinkers could be classed, or would have allowed themselves to be classed, within any single school of philosophy.

It is therefore by no means correct to delineate schools of, say, Confucianism, Taoism, or Legalism at a time when there was a certain amount of overlap among the views of writers assigned by Liu Hsiang or Liu Hsin to any one of these categories. Nevertheless, as a result of the subsequent acceptance of these divisions, there has come into being a somewhat anachronistic view of Chinese thought at this stage as developing in distinct schools. In fact, the situation was far more complex.

Many studies of Chinese thought tend to concentrate on the growth of what are regarded as the three major schools of Confucianism, Legalism, and Taoism. These terms should be used with care, particularly for the four centuries of Ch'in and Han, when major developments were taking place. Under the general term Confucianism, it is necessary to distinguish at least two basic types of thought. First, there were the precepts of Confucius and his immediate followers, which had already excited considerable praise and comment. These sayings, however, had been formulated some centuries before the foundation of China's first empire, and their application to the political and social conditions of the Ch'in and Han periods was somewhat different from what it had been for the pre-imperial units of the Warring States period. In the second place, some Han thinkers developed a more comprehensive system of philosophy which embraced ideas of cosmology along with the ethics of Confucius, and provided a place for the exercise of imperial sovereignty. This is sometimes known as "Han Confucianism."

Similarly, it is necessary to distinguish between the mystical writings of the *Tao-te ching* and the *Chuang-tzu*, which had taken shape before Han, and a scheme that formulated a universal order of nature, which was developed later. The term *tao* features in both ways of thought but with different connotations, and the scheme of universal being included attempts at a scientific explanation of the universe along with many of the ideas that may be found in the *Tao-te ching* or the *Chuang tzu*. This is described in a

6 For the discrimination of these six schools and comments on their strengths and weaknesses by Ssu-ma T'an, see *SC* 130, pp. 3288f. (William Theodore de Bary et al., *Sources of Chinese tradition* [New York and London, 1960], Vol. 1, pp. 189f.). See also Léon Vandermeersch, *La formation du légisme* (Paris, 1965), pp. 5f.

text that dates from the middle of the second century B.C., the *Huai-han-tzu*. But quite apart from these differences, the general term Taoism is also used to encompass activities that should more properly be described as Taoist religion, as opposed to Taoist thought. Taoist religion was being formulated during the second century A.D. It included the practice of a number of rites, exercises, and disciplines, and its teachers tried to fasten their faith to the ideas expressed in works such as the *Chuang-tzu*. There were, however, wide differences of belief and thought between such early writings and the faith enjoined by the masters of Taoist religion.[7]

Partly owing to the excessively rigid classification, it has often been supposed that the Confucian and Legalist views of man and political authority were polar opposites which could never be reconciled. Here again, it is necessary to compare and contrast the two "schools" with a greater degree of refinement and with less preconceived rigidity than hitherto. It is certainly true that the empire of Ch'in was founded and governed on the basis of the disciplinary principles and realistic outlook of men such as Shang Yang, Han Fei, Shen Pu-hai, and Li Ssu.[8] However, it is also true – and this is not always stressed – that in its turn Han adopted many of the principles expounded by the masters of Legalism, while being ready to adapt and combine them with a respect for Confucius within the framework of imperial government. In the closing decades of the Han period, several leading thinkers were calling for a regeneration of the principles and policies of state that are usually ascribed to Legalist origins.[9]

For reasons such as these, where the terms "Confucian," "Taoist," or "Legalist" appear below, they are used with reference to a changing situation and to attitudes to life that were evolving. They do not refer to defined philosophical schools.

THE DEVELOPMENTS OF FOUR CENTURIES

So far from being marked by stagnation, the four centuries under study saw a continuously evolving process of intellectual growth in which new ideas were suggested, tried out, and adopted or rejected. In broad terms, a clear

7 For these differences and developments, see Chapters 15 and 16 below. For general studies of Taoism, see Henri Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese religion*, trans. Frank A. Kierman, Jr. (Amherst, Mass., 1981); Max Kaltenmark, *Lao Tzu and Taoism*, trans. Robert Greaves (Stanford, Calif., 1969); and Kristofer Schipper, *Le corps taoïste* (Paris, 1982).

8 For these writers, see Jan Julius Lodewijk Duyvendak, *The Book of Lord Shang: A classic of the Chinese school of law* (London, 1928; rpt. 1963); Burton Watson, *Han Fei Tzu: Basic writings* (New York and London, 1964); Herrlee G. Creel, *Shen Pu-hai: A Chinese political philosopher of the fourth century B.C.* (Chicago and London, 1974), esp. pp. 135f.; and Chapter 1 above, p. 74.

9 For the Legalist attitude of Chia I and Ch'ao Ts'o, see Chapter 2 above, pp. 144f. For developments in Later Han, see pp. 713f. below; and Chapter 15 below, pp. 783f.

difference may be discerned in the intellectual backgrounds of Former and the Later Han, both in philosophical theory and religious practice.

Different explanations of the shape of the universe succeeded one another. The rule of the Five Phases had certainly been thought out at the beginning of the period; by the end of the period, and indeed earlier, it had so gained ground that its sequences had come to regulate some of the most detailed choices that must be made in everyday life. A new means of making use of the strange phenomena of nature for political purposes had made its appearance; from the time of Wang Mang onward it was being exploited to particularly strong effect, with a new faith placed in such forebodings. Great advances took place in astrocalendrical science, thanks to the production of more refined instruments, clearer observation, and more accurate calculations. In the meantime, the object of worship of the state religious cults had been changed, together with their venue and the manner of conducting them. New ideas of immortality had emerged and caught the imagination of artists and the trust of those who mourned the dead. By the end of the Han dynasty, imperial sovereignty had acquired a new and stronger type of intellectual backing. In addition, government officials were being trained on an intellectual basis that differed conspicuously from that of their predecessors of Ch'in and Former Han.

Before these topics are considered in detail, it is necessary to take note of some general considerations: the impact of four different attitudes of mind; the search for permanence; the need for conformity; and the tendency toward standardization.

Four attitudes of mind

Four dominant attitudes of mind may be distinguished in what is known of the intellectual history of Ch'in and Han. They were centered, respectively, on the order of nature, the peculiar position of man, the needs of government, and the call of reason.

Those who concentrated their attention on the wonders of the natural world saw the universe as a single operative unit of which man forms one, but by no means necessarily the most important, element. It follows that human plans will succeed provided that they are consonant with the order and processes of nature, as these can be understood. This way of thought is seen most extensively in the *Huai-nan-tzu*; it is the nearest approach to what is usually known as Taoism.

For the Confucian, man was the center and the measure of all things. Human beings possess certain qualities that set them apart from the other creations of nature and make them potentially the most valued living

things on earth. The logical outcome of these gifts is seen in the material expression of a civilized way of life. It is part of man's duty so to develop and utilize his special gifts that members of his own kind are organized to live together peacefully in their correct hierarchies, and to aspire to ever greater heights of moral, cultural, and esthetic achievement. This attitude is seen in works such as the compendiums on ritual (*li*), and in the opinions expressed by men such as Tung Chung-shu.

Some Ch'in and Han thinkers laid deep stress on the need to organize the life and work of mankind by means of sanctions and institutions, with the specific intention of enriching and strengthening the state. Such an aim demands obedience and discipline in the manner that had been described by the pre-imperial Legalist writers such as Shang Yang and Han Fei; the strength that lay behind this attitude may be seen in the chapters in this volume on institutions, law, and sovereignty.[10]

It is perhaps in respect of the call on reason that the most obvious innovations may be seen in Han thought. This point of view was put forward forcefully and principally by Wang Ch'ung, who refused to accept statements of fact on trust, and demanded an intellectual explanation of anything that he was asked to believe. Wang Ch'ung saw the universe as operating on the basis of systematic principles which were in theory open for all to understand, provided that no credit be given to statements that lacked verification. Fortunately, all of Wang Ch'ung's main work survives, with the exception of one chapter.

The tendency for standardization

The efforts and achievements of Ch'in and Han thinkers may possibly be explained as being in part due to a search for permanence in a highly volatile world. Certainly some of the theories that were evolved and even the institutions that were established would seem to answer such a quest and to serve as a means of bolstering man's confidence in himself. Could man but identify some of the more permanent features of the universe and explain his own being as something that had a place within their cycles, he could well be comforted when confronted with the all too obvious signs of human transience.

The ways in which such permanence is revealed cannot necessarily be reconciled. It may be seen in the reasons offered to explain the occurrence of strange phenomena or catastrophes as part of a heavenly ordained cosmos. Alternatively, some saw a permanent cycle of change in the system of

10 See Chapters 7, 8, and 9 above, and Chapter 13 below.

sixty-four hexagrams which symbolized different stages of being that moved imperceptibly from one to another. In a further scheme, the activities and changes of all parts of the universe were explained as being due to the compelling rhythm of the Five Phases, Elements, or Agents (*wu-hsing*), which governed the cosmic order in a predictable sequence. Above all, considerable attention was paid to the heavenly bodies and their movements as being the least transient of all observed phenomena; if it could be shown that human affairs were linked with those rhythms, man's lot could be seen as possessing some measure of permanence. In addition, for human affairs the insistence on a comprehensive code of conduct that would be valid enough to outlast the frail life of any single human being may have owed something to the same urge for the identification of permanent forms within which man can see his own existence and efforts as a constituent part.

Possibly stemming from such a desire, we may note a compelling need for conformity with accepted truths. Theory must be translated into practice to ensure that the annual, seasonal, and daily actions that a man or woman performs correspond with the schemes that are known to underlie ultimate reality. It is for this reason, perhaps, that a compulsion was felt to regulate human conduct to fit the observed changes of the cycle of *yin-yang* and the Five Phases; alternatively, pressure may well have been exerted to ensure conformity with the established canons and prescriptions of *li*. A further example of the need to conform may perhaps be seen in the importance attached to the scheme of sixty-four hexagrams as a structure, or even a rule of life. Likewise, there is reason to believe that conformity with chronological sequences and coincidences formed a significant element of divination.

Over many centuries, Chinese governments have attempted to impose a measure of intellectual uniformity. Approved orthodox practice has been one of the objectives for which officials have been trained during many dynasties, and the process of standardization can trace its origin to Ch'in and Han. It is almost axiomatic that a government which claims the authority to exercise rule over all mankind finds it essential to attempt to impose some measure of intellectual and cultural uniformity. It is perhaps a tribute to the success of Chinese propaganda through the ages that there has arisen a general assumption that this has been achieved, and that there has emerged a continual Chinese unity, based on a single cultural heritage and purged of uncivilized or savage activities.

For the Ch'in and Han periods, when this process of uniformity was first being developed, it is necessary to peer behind the apparent exterior to find traces of a whole host of beliefs and practices on which official Chinese

records preferred to keep silent. In particular, the process may be seen in the endeavor to draw attention away from the culture that had grown up independently in the Yangtze Valley in the centuries before the unification. Preference is nearly always shown in the records for the controlled and approved way of life of the north, as against the customs of the old kingdom of Ch'u. There were several occasions on which local religious rites that were not approved, or perhaps not even understood, were suppressed. Officials earned merit if they could show that they had imposed the regulations and customs of *li* in their districts. The call for standardization is seen in the attempts to discourage independent commentary on the classical texts and to concentrate on versions and explanations that suited the mood and the objectives of the government.

Reactions against an urge for uniformity and standardization had already been seen in China, long before the imperial period. There are some signs that this may have accounted for some of the resort to eremitism or disengagement from public life which formed a feature of China's cultural development in the centuries after Han.[11]

MYTHOLOGY

As Bodde has pointed out, whereas individual myths take their place in early Chinese culture, no systematic mythology in the form of an integrated body of material came into being.[12] Myths appear in the background of much religious development, and in some cases it is possible to trace how an ancient and traditional legendary theme was taken over and incorporated into the intellectual framework of later ages.

Such a process, however, was by no means uniform or uninhibited. Many of the richest elements of Chinese myth probably originated in the Yangtze Valley or farther south. This region, the old land of Ch'u, had long been marked by its romantic and exuberant culture, as may be seen in many of its artifacts.[13] As has been shown above, Ch'u had been one of the principal rivals of Ch'in and Han both before the unification and during the process;[14] nonetheless, there are signs that in the early stages of the Han period

11 See Chapter 4 above, p. 307; Chapter 15 below, pp. 784, 795.

12 See Derk Bodde, "Myths of ancient China," in his *Essays on Chinese civilization*, ed. Charles Le Blanc and Dorothy Borei (Princeton, 1981), p. 46. For a survey of Chinese myth, see Yüan K'o, *Chung-kuo ku-tai shen-hua* (Shanghai, 1951).

13 These characteristics are seen, for example, on the tongue and antler figures buried in graves, or on screens and other objects decorated profusely with animal motifs. See Albert Salmony, *Antler and tongue: An essay on ancient Chinese symbolism* (Ascona, 1954); and Hu-pei sheng wen-hua chü wen-wu kung-tso-tui, "Hu-pei Chiang-ling san tso Ch'u mu ch'u-t'u ta p'i chung-yao wen-wu," *WW*, 1966.5, 37, 47, Plates 2 and 3 (some illustrations are reproduced in Michael Loewe, "Man and beast: The hybrid in early Chinese art and literature," *Numen*, 25:2 [1978], 107, 114).

14 See Chapter 1 above, pp. 38f.; and Chapter 2, pp. 111f.

the culture of Ch'u enjoyed some popularity at court. For example, Liu Pang was himself a southerner, and it is said that he had a taste for the music of Ch'u. Similarly, an archeological site in Hupei, which dates from just before the unification, includes mantic documents that come from the usages of both Ch'in and Ch'u.[15]

However, the tendency toward standardization was set in motion from the north by officials who were based in Ch'ang-an and who were anxious to show that primeval customs were fast giving way to the civilizing influence of the Confucian ethic. The aboriginal elements and myths of the south therefore tended to be disparaged. At best, they could be ignored or eliminated; at worst, they could be encapsulated within the newly evolving cultural framework and its objectives.

For the main sources of the myths that survive in Ch'in and Han religion, we must turn to documents which draw extensively on pre-imperial material, but whose extant version may depend on the work of a Han editor. Perhaps the richest of such works is the *Shan-hai ching* (Classic of the mountains and lakes); some of the chapters of this book probably reached their present form by the beginning of the Christian era.[16] The book poses as a guide to travelers visiting holy mountains and other sites within China, informing them of the strange creatures, animal, hybrid, and spiritual, that they may encounter in their wanderings; of the powers that such creatures may wield; and of the consequences of meeting them, consuming their flesh, or wearing their fur.

The *Ch'u-tz'u* (Songs of the south) again includes material of both pre-imperial and early imperial times. Many of the poems that came from Ch'u were inspired by mystics, whose imagery draws freely on the accepted myths of central and southern China. A further source which expects its readers to be fully conversant with such lore will be found in the *Lieh-tzu*, whose various chapters may be dated from between 300 B.C. and A.D. 300.[17] It has been possible to identify a number of the figures, personages, and subjects mentioned in these texts with some of the details of iconography of the small number of paintings that date from Han or earlier.[18]

15 See Michael Loewe, *Crisis and conflict in Han China* (London, 1974), p. 197; Jao Tsung-i and Tseng Hsien-t'ung, *Yün-meng Ch'in chien jih-shu yen-chiu* (Hong Kong, 1982), pp. 4f.

16 For details, see Michael Loewe, *Ways to paradise: The Chinese quest for immortality* (London, 1979), p. 148 notes 11 and 12. For an annotated translation of the work, see Rémi Mathieu, *Étude sur la mythologie et l'ethnologie de la Chine ancienne. Traduction annotée du* Shanhai jing. 2 vols. (Paris, 1983).

17 For the *Ch'u-tz'u*, see David Hawkes, *Ch'u Tz'u: The songs of the south* (Oxford, 1959). For the *Lieh-tzu*, see A. C. Graham, *The book of Lieh-tzu* (London, 1960).

18 E.g., see the figures of twelve gods (or shamans) on the Ch'u silk manuscript of ca. 400 B.C. (Loewe, "Man and beast," p. 103). For the imagery of the painting found in tomb no. 1, Ma-wang tui, see Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, pp. 34f. For a further painting, of the Warring States period, see reproductions published by Wen-wu ch'u-pan-she under the title *Ch'ang-sha Ch'u mu po-hua* (Peking, 1973).

The universe and its holy beings

The *Huai-nan-tzu* was compiled at the court of a kingdom in central China, and was presented to the throne in 139 B.C. Being a corporate compilation, in which a number of hands took part, the book cannot be expected to maintain a uniform treatment of its theme, which is nothing less than a systematic explanation of the universe, its wonders and mode of operation. The different chapters invoke the myths of China in connection with subjects such as the geography and shape of the universe, the abode of the holy beings (*shen*), and shamanism.[19] The *Huai-nan-tzu* is concerned with discriminating between the different zones of heaven and earth and their relationship, and much of its explanation is couched in terms of myth. The book discusses in the same way the question of how the stars, the winds, or the islands of the ocean fit into a major system, and how the characteristic features of those elements came to be formed. Parts of the book may almost be taken as an active guide for the benefit of mystics and pilgrims setting out on their way to the more arcane parts of the universe.

Like the *Classic of the mountains and the lakes*, the *Huai-nan-tzu* is concerned with the question of where the holy beings may be thought to reside. There are also a number of references to the part played by intermediaries and shamans in achieving contact with such beings, or to the stairways whereby they make their journey from one world to the next. Mythical elements are sometimes blended in these chapters with a tendency to impose a systematic scheme or order, backed by numerical considerations.[20]

Culture heroes: the meetings of partners and creation

Chinese mythology alludes to the emergence and work of culture heroes. It was they who taught man the basic techniques that enabled him to adopt a settled form of existence and thus attain higher and higher standards of material culture. It was from such masters that man learned to till the fields, to forge tools from metals, and to control the rush of mighty waters. Some of these myths developed into tales of godheads to be worshipped, such as the god of the stove; some of these tales, repeated in Han sources, may have led the way to the practice of alchemy.[21]

There are also tales of the rare but regular meetings of partners which were essential to ensure the continuity of the universe; in time, these

19 See John S. Major, "Topography and cosmology in early Han thought: Chapter four of the *Huai-nan-tzu*," Diss. Harvard Univ., 1973.

20 See Michael Loewe, *Chinese ideas of life and death: Faith, myth and reason in the Han period (202 B.C.–A.D. 220)* (London, 1982), p. 50.

21 See Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, p. 37.

meetings became associated with the procurement of the secret of immortality. The sources carry somewhat different accounts of the meetings staged between earthly monarchs, such as King Mu of Chou or Han Wu-ti with the Queen Mother of the West. A later version tells of the need for that semi-divine queen to meet another figure who stands above the human race; this is her partner, the King Father of the East, and their meeting must be contrived in the interests of carrying on the cosmic processes. The same theme recurs in the tale of the annual meeting of two stars, identified as Vega and Altair, always on the seventh day of the seventh month. This meeting was likewise necessary for the continuity of the universe; it appears frequently in the poetry and iconography of the Han period.[22]

Other myths tell of the creation of the world. According to one account, this came about by the separation of heaven and earth. A figure named P'an Ku, who had been contained within a chicken's egg, played a crucial role by growing constantly between the two until a distance of ninety thousand leagues lay between them. A later version adds the details of how, after P'an Ku's death, the different parts of his body were transformed into parts of the earth; his breath became clouds and wind, and his blood was turned into the rivers.[23] According to a totally different account of creation, which is included in the *Huai-nan-tzu*, it was Nü Kua, female partner of Fu Hsi, who created order out of chaos:[24]

Long, long ago the four extreme pillars of the world lay in disorder and the nine continents were split apart. The heavens did not form a complete covering above and the earth did not give full support below. Fierce fires flamed without abatement; mighty waters flowed without cease. Wild beasts devoured mankind, birds of prey seized the old and the weak in their talons.

So Nü-kua fused the five-coloured stones together, to fill up the gaps in the azure skies. She severed the feet of a turtle, and with these she set up the four extreme pillars of the world. She slew the black dragon, to save the province of Chi, at the centre of the world. She collected together the ash of burnt reeds to stem the uncontrolled rush of the waters.

The gaps in the azure skies were filled up; the four extreme pillars stood straight; the mighty rush of the waters was dried up; the province of Chi lay flat. Wild beasts and reptiles lay dead, and mankind lived.

Monarchs of prehistory

A further assumption, enshrined in legend rather than authenticated by history, concerns the earliest rulers believed to have governed mankind. Their names and their sequence are subject to variation in accordance with

22 Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, pp. 86f., 119f. 23 Bodde, "Myths of ancient China," pp. 58f.
24 *Huai-nan-tzu* 6, pp. 10a et seq.; Loewe, *Ideas of life and death*, pp. 64–65.

different ancient traditions. The general expression the "three monarchs [*san-huang*] and five sovereigns [*wu-ti*]" serves as a symbol for those early kings. Long after the expression had been coined, it had been forgotten to what figures they referred, with the result that the three and the five are identified somewhat inconsistently.

Other mythical rulers in this primeval stage were incorporated in what became the Confucian tradition, where they acted as paragons and exemplars whose dispensations were utterly benevolent. Thus, one of the myths that concerns the growth of human institutions refers to the kingship of the blessed Yao and his successor Shun, under whose guidance man reached heights of happiness and prosperity that could never be matched later. Following this golden age, the rule of man passed to Yü, known in another context as a culture hero who saved earth and man from perpetual inundation. In the myths that concern the establishment of kingship Yü stands out as an innovator, for to him is ascribed the first hereditary house, or dynasty. Before his time, monarchs succeeded one another by choice, thanks to their qualities and characteristics. From Yü onward, kingship was to pass from father to son or from brother to brother.[25]

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The imperial cults

The peoples of the Ch'in and Han age inherited from their forbears the worship of a number of deities. In some cases this could be traced back for some 1500 years or more, and while many of the details of that worship may well have been transmitted orally in a regular and accurate manner, it is only too likely that by the time of the imperial age, ideas regarding the nature of those deities had undergone considerable change. Most of the information available for Ch'in and Han concerns the imperial cults that were maintained as a responsibility of the state, but even here much remains unknown, and we depend on surmise rather than direct record.

The principal powers worshipped by the emperors and officials of Ch'in and Han were first the *ti*, and thereafter *t'ien* (Heaven). Both cults had long associations with previous ruling houses, in the one case that of Shang-Yin, and in the other that of Chou. *Ti*, or *shang-ti*, the "supreme *ti*," had been the object of worship of the Shang kings. He was viewed as the arbiter who

25 For a study of some of these early monarchs and the processes and symbolism of abdication, see Sarah Allan, *The heir and the sage: Dynastic legend in early China* (San Francisco, 1981). For the complex system of hereditary succession in the early dynasties, see Chang Kwang-chih, *Early Chinese civilization: Anthropological perspectives* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), pp. 72f.

controlled human destinies, and he was probably conceived in anthropomorphic terms. To the realm where he resided there had departed the souls of the deceased kings of Shang, and by joining his company they became able to act as mediators with the surviving king who had acceded to the throne on earth. In this way, temporal authority was supported by a religious sanction, and the kings for their part made this clear by the large number of observances, including sacrifices, that they maintained. It was thanks to their inveterate habit of consulting *ti*, by means of divination, that what are probably the earliest examples of Chinese writing have been preserved.[26]

The kings of Chou, however, may have come from a different ethnic stock and they worshipped a different deity, Heaven (*t'ien*). It was to *t'ien* that they traced their right to rule, owing to the bestowal of a mandate that entitled them to do so. Herein lay an important difference, insofar as the kings of Shang were related to the same family as the *ti* – those of their ancestors who had risen to that estate. *T'ien*, however, could impart the rule of the world to members of any family that it chose; for this reason, there was a loss of identity between the realm of *t'ien* (the godhead) and that of the kings of earth.

During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods (722–221 B.C.), when China was split into a number of coexistent units and kingdoms, the kings of Chou could hardly lay claim to a right to rule that had been imparted solely to them as a direct charge from Heaven. Nor could any of the other kings do so, as long as a king of Chou survived, however truncated his power and territory had become.[27] In the meantime, the idea of the supreme *ti* who merited worship from the kings on earth had been subject to change; it had been recognized that, in addition to *shang-ti*, there were a number of other *ti* to whom services were due, and who were in no way related to the royal houses. We thus hear that, from at least the seventh century, the rulers of Ch'in had been erecting shrines for the worship of some of these powers, known, for example, as the *ti* (or "power") of green-blue or of yellow.[28] Identification of the *ti* with one of the five colors reflects the growing influence of the theory of the Five Phases.[29]

The practice of worshipping four major *ti*, of white, green-blue, yellow,

26 The standard study of this subject is David Keightley, *Sources of Shang history: The oracle-bone inscriptions of bronze age China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1978). For marks and inscriptions that predate the Shang period, see K. C. Chang, *Art, myth and ritual: The path to political authority in ancient China* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), pp. 81f.

27 The title of king of Chou actually survived until 256 B.C.

28 See *Han shu* 25A, pp. 1196, 1199 for worship by early leaders of Ch'in to named *ti* during the seventh and fifth centuries B.C. 29 See pp. 690f. below.

and red, seems to have become established by the time of the Ch'in empire. One of the first acts of Kao-ti, after the founding of Han in the last years of the third century B.C., was to augment these ceremonies by instituting services to a fifth *ti*, of black, thus ensuring that all five of the forces thought to control the universe received due recognition.

Probably until about 31 B.C., the worship of these five powers formed the central act of prayer made on behalf of the empire. The rites were generally conducted at shrines set up at Yung, a traditional religious center to the west of the city of Ch'ang-an, but sometimes they were held at other sites. Attendance by the emperor himself took place for the first time in 165 B.C., and although it was intended that such visits should be undertaken at set intervals, this was done only during Wu-ti's reign. That emperor attended no less than seven times between 123 and 92 B.C.; his successors did so in 56, 44, 40, and 38 B.C. A collection of nineteen hymns which were sung at these services, and which have been preserved in the *Han shu*, inform us that the rites included burnt offerings, and that they were intended to invoke the power whose blessing was being sought and to welcome his arrival on earth.[30]

Further additions were made to the imperial cults during Wu-ti's reign. While continuing to observe the rites dedicated to the five *ti*, the emperor inaugurated services honoring Hou-t'u, the Earth Queen, and T'ai-i, the Grand Unity. A bull, a sheep, and a pig were sacrificed to the Earth Queen at a site specially shaped and constructed at Fen-yin, in Ho-tung commandery. Wu-ti himself was present at the first ceremony in 114 and on at least five other occasions; his successors attended these rites five times during the years up to 37 B.C.

The ceremonies addressed to the Grand Unity were established by Wu-ti at the winter solstice of 113 B.C. He attended the inaugural ceremony in person and visited the site set aside for this worship near his summer palace of Kan-ch'üan on three other occasions. His successors did so ten times between 61 and 37. The form of worship paid due heed to the powers of the sun and the moon, and included the sacrifice of animals.[31]

A major change occurred in the Han imperial cults after about 31 B.C., when these services were superseded by rites addressed to Heaven (*t'ien*). New sites of worship were established at the capital city, thus eliminating the need for the emperor to embark on a long and expensive progress every time he took part in the ceremonies. New forms of worship were substi-

30 *HS* 22, pp. 1052f.; Édouard Chavannes, *Les mémoires historiques de Se-Ma Ts'ien* (Paris, 1895–1905; rpt. Paris, 1969), Vol. III, pp. 612f. Loewe, *Ideas of life and death*, pp. 128f.; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 167f.

31 For the worship of Hou-t'u and T'ai-i, see Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 168f.

tuted for the somewhat gaudy and extravagant performances that had characterized previous practice. In the discussions that accompanied this major change, it was suggested that the new type of worship might forge a link between the dynastic house and Heaven; it was hoped that Heaven would respond accordingly. The precedent of the house of Chou was explicitly mentioned, and it was also hoped that, as a result of the change, the emperor's line would be blessed by the birth of an heir.

This change accompanied other significant developments of the reigns of Yüan-ti (49–33 B.C.) and Ch'eng-ti (33–7 B.C.). It was an age when reformist ideas were taking precedence over the modernist policies that had been promoted under Wu-ti. One of the signs of the times was the reduction of expenditure on luxuries for the palace, and this was duly cited as a reason for ending the practice of costly ceremonies. However, the transfer of the emperor's devotions from the five *ti*, the Earth Queen, and the Grand Unity to Heaven was by no means fully or finally accomplished in 31 B.C. The decision to do so was brought into question on several occasions, with change and counterchange following one another. Finally, under the influence of Wang Mang, it was firmly determined that worship should be addressed to Heaven, and that the services should take place at sites near the capital city. From then (A.D. 5) until the end of the imperial period, Chinese emperors have worshipped Heaven as their first duty.

A similar change of emphasis is seen in the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices near or on Mount T'ai.[32] This was one of China's most famous holy mountains, and it has attracted the pilgrimage of emperors on rare occasions throughout history. Although the nature of the performances has been shrouded in secrecy, the accounts that are carried in the histories allow some inferences to be drawn. When the first Ch'in emperor embarked on the ascent, in 219 B.C., he did so as part of an imperial progress designed to demonstrate the achievement of his conquests and the success of his dispensation.

A century later, Wu-ti carried out the ascent on two occasions (110 and 106 B.C.), and the event was commemorated by the adoption of the reign title Yüan-feng, "the primary *feng* ceremony." From symbolic elements in the services that were performed, it is clear that attention was directed to the five *ti*, and that a special emphasis was laid on *huang-ti*, the "power of yellow," for reasons that will be seen immediately.

No reference seems to have been made to the worship of Heaven in the course of the ceremonies of 110 or 106 B.C. But when Kuang-wu-ti (r. A.D. 25–57), the founding emperor of Later Han, asked his ministers

32 For Mount T'ai and its ceremonies, see *SC* 6, p. 242 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 140); *SC* 28, pp. 1366, 1396f. (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. III, pp. 430, 495); *HS* 25A, pp. 1233f.; *Hou-Han shu* (tr.) 7, pp. 3164f.; and Édouard Chavannes, *Le T'ai chan* (Paris, 1910), pp. 158f., 308f.

about the procedures that should be followed in making the ascent and worshipping at the summit (A.D. 56), he was told that it would be a means of notifying Heaven of his own accomplishments; in this way a link could be forged between Heaven and the heritage of the dynasty. Here we see the development of the idea that an emperor should report to Heaven on the way he had been conducting his stewardship. Great care was taken to ensure that the site was prepared according to the specified and symbolic dimensions, with vessels, jades, and other equipment of the requisite forms.

Two further significant features may be noted in the conduct of the imperial cults. After considerable discussion with specialists, whose imagination may sometimes have exceeded the accuracy of their information, Wu-ti had the Ming-t'ang, or Hall of Holiness, constructed at the foot of Mount T'ai. This was designed to follow some of the oldest traditions in China, and the form of the edifice that was finally approved incorporated a number of religious and mythological elements.[33] At this site, Wu-ti intended to demonstrate that his reign was being blessed by spiritual powers, and the sacrifices that he performed there to the five *ti* and to the Grand Unity identify the powers that he had in mind. The Ming-t'ang also served as a solemn venue wherein the emperor's authority could be imposed on his subordinates. Traces of a different building which may also have had a religious function have been tentatively identified as the foundations of the P'i-yung Hall; a reconstruction of this site, lying to the south of Ch'ang-an, has been possible.[34]

Second, in the ceremonies performed at Mount T'ai in 110 considerable attention was paid to *huang-ti*, the power of yellow, (see p. 695 below), which had perhaps been personified as the Yellow Emperor. Wu-ti evidently regarded him as an intermediary who could provide the gift of immortality, and he therefore sacrificed at his tomb. There appears to have been some confusion of motive here, as the question was raised of how a being who was believed to have acquired immortality could have left behind remains that were fit for veneration. On this occasion, some of the worshippers may have thought of immortality as existence in a realm beyond this earth, while others conceived solely of an extension of the life of the body. Wu-ti's sacrifice and motive may perhaps be explained as being due to the disappointment that he had recently suffered at the hands of three self-styled intermediaries, or masters of diverse arts, who had failed dismally to redeem their promises. These had included the production of

33 For the Ming-t'ang, see Loewe, *Ideas of life and death*, p. 135.

34 For the site and reconstruction of the P'i-yung Hall, see Wang Zhongshu, *Han civilization*, trans. K. C. Chang et al. (New Haven and London, 1982), p. 10 and figs. 30–32.

the elixir of life and the bringing back to life of one of Wu-ti's adored consorts. It is possible that the services to *huang-ti* were rendered in reaction against such failures.[35]

The Han emperors also spent considerable time and effort in keeping alive the memories of their ancestors. Some emperors chose to be buried in elaborate and expensive tombs; they did so partly as a mark of their prestige, and partly perhaps in the hope of attaining that type of immortality which is conveyed by an imposing monument. Some preferred to be buried in a modest style, in order to spare their subjects hardship. In addition, from the beginning of the Han period, orders had been given for the erection of shrines dedicated to the memory of an emperor, both in the capital and in the provinces.

The emperors would pay ceremonial visits, usually on occasions such as accession or attainment of the age of majority. A permanent complement of servicemen, priests, cooks, and musicians was maintained in order to keep watch over the sites and to offer regular sacrifices. With the passage of the generations, the number of shrines erected for this purpose had grown beyond all expectation, and the consequent expense to the imperial treasury had grown correspondingly. By the reign of Yüan-ti (49–33 B.C.), 167 shrines in the provinces and 176 at Ch'ang-an were under the protection of a force of 45,000 men; there was a further complement of over 12,000 specialists who saw that the 24,000 offerings were cooked in the appropriate way and presented to the accompaniment of the requisite prayers and music.[36]

It is hardly surprising that the reformist statesmen of Yüan-ti's reign insisted that these services and expenses should be reduced. By about 40 B.C. services at some two hundred of these shrines had been discontinued, and the ceremonies reserved for the memory of Kao-ti, Wen-ti and Wu-ti. In Later Han they were further restricted, being maintained only for the two founders, Kao-ti and Kuang-wu-ti. It would appear that two principles had come into conflict: the desire to strengthen the links that bound the dynastic house to the past, and the need to economize on state expenditure.

A further measure of economy, into which other motives may have entered, affected religious practice during the reign of Ch'eng-ti. Orders were given to abolish services that had been held at 475 sites of worship of various types in the provinces, out of a total of 683. At Yung, all except 15

35 For the subject of immortality, see pp. 715f. below.

36 Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 179f. There is some doubt regarding the nature of these offerings – i.e., whether they took the form of sacrifices or the presentation of meals, and whether they took place in the shrines that surmounted the tombs or at shrines built separately at adjacent sites. Practice may have changed between Former and Later Han. See Yang K'uan, "Hsien Ch'in mu shang chien-chu wen-t'i ti tsai t'an-t'ao," *KK*, 1983.7, 636–38, 640.

of 303 (or according to one text 203) sites were affected in like manner. These services had been supported by the central government, but it was maintained that they did not conform with correct procedures, and that they should therefore be suppressed. They had been served by different types of intermediaries or specialists, of whom little is known.[37] There is no suggestion that emperors had taken part in these rites.

There were, however, other ceremonies that were partly of a religious nature in which the emperor or sometimes the empress, and certainly high officials of state, participated with a view to securing immediate material benefits. The complex arrangements for the various days that marked the beginning of the year included the "rite of the grand exorcism," which is especially well evidenced for Later Han. The rite included a symbolic mime in which 120 young men performed a dance while the "grand exorcist," clad in bearskin and armed, led the way to eliminate evil demons or influences from the palace. The long and colorful ceremony included an incantation in which twelve spirits were proclaimed as expelling ten baleful influences or pestilences; details vary in the different accounts of this annual performance.[38]

Some of the ceremonies that were supported by the government were designed to welcome the incoming seasons with due propriety; they were supposed to ensure that the necessary climatic changes would take place at the correct times, and thus bring prosperity to the agricultural year.[39] With this objective, the emperor and his officials would take the plow in their hands and inaugurate the season, or the empress would take the first steps in the year's work of sericulture. The inauguration of the season for plowing carried with it elements of what may have been a very old rite in the array of clay bulls that was carefully set out, and that has been interpreted as a remnant of a bull sacrifice.[40] From a source that may date from after the Han period, we learn of an elaborate rite to invoke rain in time of drought in which officials took part. This ceremony included the use of clay dragons and a complex dance in which giant dragons were shown as taking part; in addition, there were a number of exercises in sympathetic magic, and signs of intellectual considerations taking priority over rites that had first been inspired by other urges.[41]

A further ritual, known as "watching for the ethers," was designed to

37 Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, p. 175.

38 See Derk Bodde, *Festivals in classical China: New Year and other annual observances during the Han dynasty*, 206 B.C.–A.D. 220 (Princeton and Hong Kong, 1975), pp. 81ff.

39 *Hou-Han shu* (tr.) 4, pp. 3101f.; *HHS* (tr.) 5, pp. 3117f.

40 Bodde, *Festivals*, pp. 201f.

41 *Ch'un-ch'iu fan-lu* 16 ("Ch'iu yü"); Michael Loewe, "The cult of the dragon and the invocation for rain" (forthcoming).

determine what changes were occurring in the flow of those energies that infused life into the world of nature. It was necessary to observe and mark those changes, so that the corresponding energies and activities of man would be in conformity with the changes of the natural order and its rhythms.[42] Most of these occasions were moments of great solemnity, marked by the attendance of senior officials of state in their correct order of precedence, and doubtless conducted with considerable formality.

Popular cults

Considerably less is known about the popular cults than about those forms of worship in which members of the imperial house or officials took part. It may be assumed that there was a general feeling of awe for two types of holy being, known as *shen* and *kuei*, but there is no description of the character or powers of these entities. Many of the *shen* feature in works such as the *Classic of the mountains and the lakes* and the *Huai-nan-tzu*, where they are conceived in animal or hybrid form, with powers that were attached to defined sites on earth.[43] The term *kuei* refers, among other things, to the spiritual elements of the dead; sometimes the *kuei* have been able to assume the bodily form of another type of creature and to return to earth to exact vengeance for wrongs suffered during a human existence. Thanks to the evidence of recently discovered manuscripts, the concept of the hungry ghost (*e-kuei*) may now be traced back to pre-Buddhist China, to at least the period immediately before the unification of 221 B.C.[44]

Sacrifices and services were also rendered to a whole host of mountains and rivers, to the sun, moon, stars, constellations, and planets; to the lords of the winds and the rain, and to many other named deities.[45] The extension of religious rites at a popular level evidently grew to considerable dimensions and drew the criticism of writers of both Former and Later Han as being extravagant and hypocritical.[46] In addition to the suppression of some of these forms of worship on account of the expense that was involved, some were abolished in the belief that they were improper, being directed to objects that did not merit respect and involving conduct that was permissive or even lewd. Somewhat inconsistently with his other practices, Wang Mang allowed a number of shrines that had recently been

42 Derk Bodde, "The Chinese cosmic magic known as watching for the ethers," in *Studia Serica Bernhard Karlgren dedicata*, ed. Søren Egerod and Else Glahn (Copenhagen, 1959), pp. 14–35.

43 See Loewe, "Man and beast."

44 The expression *e-kuei* appears on one of the mantic strips found at Shui-hu-ti (no. 834 reverse; see Jao and Tseng, *Yün-meng Ch'in chien jih-shu yen-chiu*, p. 27).

45 *SC* 28, pp. 1371f. (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. III, pp. 440f.); *HS* 25A, pp. 1206f.

46 *Yen-t'ieh lun* 6 ("San pu tsu"), pp. 204f.; *Ch'ien-fu lun* 3 ("Fou-ch'ih"), p. 125.

abolished to be restored, and we are informed that by the end of his reign, there were no less than 1,700 places of worship under protection, dedicated to all types of deities and served with offerings of animals and birds. Shortly afterward we hear of at least one provincial official, Tsung Chün, who took steps to ban the practice of such rites in his area.[47]

A widespread soteriological cult that excited considerable attention in 3 B.C. is described in no less than three passages of the *Han shu*. The cult was linked with a search for immortality through the medium of the Queen Mother of the West, and the *Han shu* can speak for itself:[48]

In the first month of the fourth year of Chien-p'ing, the population were running around in a state of alarm, each person carrying a manikin of straw or hemp. People exchanged these emblems with one another, saying that they were carrying out the advent procession. Large numbers of persons, amounting to thousands, met in this way on the roadsides, some with dishevelled hair or going barefoot. Some of them broke down the barriers of gates by night; some clambered over walls to make their way into [houses]; some harnessed teams of horses to carriages and rode at full gallop, setting up relay stations so as to convey the tokens. They passed through twenty-six commanderies and kingdoms until they reached the capital city.

That summer the people came together in meetings in the capital city and in the commanderies and kingdoms. In the village settlements, the lanes and paths across the fields they held services and set up gaming boards for a lucky throw; and they sang and danced in worship of the Queen Mother of the West. They also passed round a written message, saying "The Mother tells the people that those who wear this talisman will not die; and let those who do not believe Her words look below the pivots on their gates, and there will be white hairs there to show that this is true."

By the autumn these practices had abated. This was the time when the emperor's grandmother, the dowager empress Fu, was behaving arrogantly and taking an active part in the government.

Buddhism

In Later Han there occurred a major change in religious belief and practice that was destined to affect the future course of Chinese culture in nearly all respects. This was the arrival of the foreign faith of the Buddha, shortly to leave its mark on Chinese philosophy, literature, language, and art. There is no direct statement of the manner in which the religion came to China, and we must rely on a few references in the histories from which a fuller story must be inferred. It may be assumed that travelers or pilgrims

47 See *HS* 25B, p. 1270; *HHS* 41, p. 1411, for the action taken by Tsung Chün, known also for his protest against the malpractices of officials. See also Chapter 4 above, p. 294.

48 This account is taken from *HS* 27C (1), p. 1476. For shorter accounts of the incident, see *HS* 11, p. 342 (Homer H. Dubs, *The History of the Former Han dynasty* [Baltimore, 1938–55], Vol. III, pp. 33–34); and *HS* 26, pp. 1311–12. See also Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, pp. 98f.

brought Buddhism along the Silk Roads, but whether this first occurred from the earliest period when those roads were open, ca. 100 B.C., must remain open to question.[49]

The earliest direct references to Buddhism concern the first century A.D., but they include hagiographical elements and are not necessarily reliable or accurate. These accounts relate the famous dream of Ming-ti, in A.D. 65, and the allegation that Liu Ying was practicing the faith at much the same time.[50] We would probably be justified in believing that by the middle of the first century B.C., the religion had penetrated to areas north of the Huai River and established a presence in Lo-yang; by the end of the second century, a prosperous community had been settled at P'eng-ch'eng (in modern Kiangsu). Probably the first Buddhist scripture to be written in Chinese, the *Sutra in forty-two sections*, dates from the late first or second century A.D., but its authenticity has frequently been brought into question. To An Shih-kao, a Parthian, belongs the credit for initiating the first project for a systematic translation of Buddhist texts into Chinese in the second half of the second century.[51]

On the negative side, there are no identified references to Buddhism in some writings where these might well have been expected had the faith been exercising a steady influence when they were written (for example, the works of critics such as Wang Ch'ung, Wang Fu, or Hsün Yüeh). A few traces of Buddhist iconography have been seen in the paintings, statues, and reliefs of the Later Han period.[52] Shortly afterward, Buddhist ideas and symbols may have begun to intrude into the current versions of native Chinese myths.[53]

The principal appeal of Buddhism lay in its promise of freedom from pain to suffering humanity at a time when no other system of thought or religion was offering such a blessing. It will be seen below[54] that contemporary native developments known as Taoist religion held out promises of a somewhat different nature and pointed a way forward by means that were completely different from those of the self-scrutiny and discipline of Buddhism. Both Taoist religion and Buddhism gave rise to an organized

49 For the Han advance to the west, see Chapter 6 above, pp. 405f.; and Ying-shih Yü, *Trade and expansion in Han China: A study in the structure of Sino-barbarian economic relations* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967).

50 E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist conquest of China* (Leiden, 1959), pp. 22f., 26f.; Chapter 3 above, p. 258, and Chapter 16 below, pp. 821f. 51 Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, pp. 26f.

52 For recent finds, see Lien-yün-kang shih po-wu kuan, "Lien-yün-kang shih K'ung-wang-shan mo-ai tsao-hsiang tiao-ch'a pao-kao," *WW*, 1981.7, 1–7; and Pu Lien-sheng, "K'ung-wang-shan Tung-Han mo-ai fo-chiao tsao-hsiang ch'u pien," *WW*, 1982.9, 61–65.

53 See Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, p. 117, for an account of a meeting between the Queen Mother of the West and Han Wu-ti which includes a reference to the liberation from desires and to the consumption of peaches. 54 See Chapters 15 and 16 below.

church, with dignitaries, rites, and scriptures. In addition to its effects on Chinese language and literature, Buddhism also left its mark on China's architecture in the way that monasteries, temples, and pagodas came to be designed.

One important difference between Buddhism and the native Chinese systems of thought lay in the association of an individual's ethical conduct with his destiny and happiness. The Buddhist could achieve a state of bliss by subjecting himself to personal discipline and obedience to rules. When combined with abstention from activities known to be wicked or harmful to others, behavior bound by such rules could bear fruit in the happier state of existence that would await him in a future life. Contrary behavior could produce contrary results. No such association was propounded by moralists who espoused Confucius' precepts, and no connection was traced between ethical conduct and destiny by those of a Taoist frame of mind, who enjoined conformity with nature's rule as the most successful way of life.

Rationalists such as Wang Ch'ung held that there could be no certainty that human beings could ensure their happiness by accepting a code of ethics or by devoting themselves to approved virtues; all men, good, bad, or indifferent, were liable to the indiscriminate hazards of nature or the injuries inflicted by man. Those who sought to overcome difficulties or predict the future by the use of divination had yet another approach to destiny, which again lay outside the Buddhist framework.

The relationship between Buddhism and Taoist religion came to be complex. The ideas and practices of each faith influenced those of the other, despite some basic contradictions. Buddhism saw a state of bliss in liberation from the restrictions of bodily existence, whereas many Taoist practices were designed to procure the prolongation of life in this world. There was also a deep conflict between the Buddhist view of the self and the Confucian view of mankind; the Buddhist looked to the improvement and the salvation of the individual that could be brought about without reference to the individual's neighbors. The Confucian view was that of a person whose significance lay in his relationship to his family and in the social order that defined his place and his duties to others.

Shamanism

The first certain reference to shamanism in Chinese literature is to be found in the *Kuo-yü* (Discourses of the States), which was probably compiled during the fourth century B.C.[55] But there can be little doubt that shaman-

55 *Kuo-yü* 18, p. 1a.

ism was practiced at a much earlier period, in view of the presence of the term *wu*, whatever its significance may have been, in the oracle bone inscriptions of the Shang period. More definite references and descriptions are to be found in some of the poems of the *Songs of the south*; the Nine Songs of that collection have been interpreted as deriving from shamanist practice in the Yangtze Valley.[56]

Different terms were used at first to discriminate between shamans of different sexes, but by the Han period this distinction seems to have disappeared. A number of shamans or shamanesses are mentioned by name in texts such as the *Classic of the mountains and the lakes*, sometimes with a short account of some of their characteristic activities. Their powers included the ability to make contact with the beings of another world; they could invoke the spirits of the dead to return to earth, and they could cure diseases. Sometimes they may have done so by acting as a substitute for a patient, suffering symptoms that they had successfully diverted to themselves.[57] Shamans could also be of great service in calling for rain at times of drought. According to some accounts, if the immediate efforts were unavailing, the drastic step could be taken of exposing the shaman mercilessly to the full heat of the sun, as a means of bringing relief to a stricken area.[58] Shamans could also be used to bring down a curse or to inflict evil.

Shamans are sometimes portrayed in animal or hybrid form; they may be depicted with a tree, or they may be shown accompanied by snakes. They achieved their results by incantation or dance, sometimes entering into a trance and mouthing gibberish. In addition to their prevalence in the Yangtze Valley, they were also particularly active in the Huai Valley and in the Shantung peninsula. The great majority of the information that is available concerns their relations with members of the higher reaches of society, either in the palace or with officials; it can only be inferred that their practices were common elsewhere. At times these activities drew sharp criticism and even led to attempts at suppression. At one time a ban may have been imposed on the holding of office by members of shamans' families, and in 99 B.C. they were forbidden, not entirely successfully, to carry on their practices along the roadsides. In one incident the famous general Pan Ch'ao resorted to the murder of some

56 See Arthur Waley, *The nine songs: A study of shamanism in ancient China* (London, 1955); and Hawkes, *Songs of the south*, pp. 35f.

57 For suggestions of this possibility, see *SC* 12, p. 459; *SC* 28, p. 1388 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. III, p. 472); Jao and Tseng, *Yün-meng Ch'in chien jih-shu yen-chiu*, Plate 44, no. 1083.

58 Loewe, *Ideas of life and death*, pp. 107f.; and Loewe, "The cult of the dragon."

shamans in order to prevent them from serving some of China's enemies in the northwest (A.D. 73). In A.D. 140 a provincial official named Luan Pa took steps to prevent shamans from forcing the common people to offer monetary contributions.[59]

As might be expected, Wang Ch'ung criticized the belief in the efficacy of the shamans' powers. He poured scorn on the way they entered a trance, muttering nonsense, with the unredeemed promise that they could bring the dead back to life. But a few decades later we hear Chang Heng, man of science and mystic, giving full credence to their power to bring about good or to wreak evil. The condemnation that is voiced in the *Discourses on salt and iron*, and later in Wang Fu's *Ch'ien-fu lun*, springs from different reasons. Here the shamans are blamed for practicing gross deceit on a gullible public, as their claims could hardly ever be substantiated.[60]

MANTIC BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Characteristics

In a prescientific age, when the means of obtaining information are slender and the appearance of unforeseen and inexplicable dangers is frequent, resort to occult sources for guidance acquires correspondingly great significance. There is therefore no difficulty in understanding why the consultation of oracles and the practice of divination occupied a far more important place in Ch'in and Han China than it has in more recent times. By consulting oracles, man was looking to signs produced spontaneously in the normal course of nature which would indicate the answer to his questions; by practicing divination, he was deliberately causing signs to be produced which could then be subjected to interpretation. The distinction between the two processes is not necessarily important, nor can we be certain that it was recognized by Chinese of the Ch'in and Han periods. It is nonetheless to be kept in mind in reviewing the mantic practices of that time.

It is abundantly clear from evidence of a number of types that divination and the consultation of oracles played a significant role in official and unofficial life. The histories relate a number of incidents in which these processes were carried out before decisions were taken, and some names of

59 *HS* 6, p. 203 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 105); *HHS* 47, p. 1573; *HHS* 57, p. 1841.

60 For Wang Ch'ung, see *Lun-heng* 20 ("Lun-ssu"), p. 875 (Alfred Forke, *Lun-heng* [Shanghai, London, and Leipzig, 1907 and 1911; rpt. New York, 1962], Vol. I, p. 196); *LH* 22 ("Ting-kuei"), pp. 939, 942 (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 244, 246); and *LH* 25 ("Chieh-ch'u"), pp. 1039, 1041 (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 535, 537). For Chang Heng, see *HHS* 59, p. 1911. See also *YTL* 6 ("San pu tsu"), p. 205; and *CFL* 3 ("Fou ch'ih"), p. 125.

well-known diviners are mentioned in some of the texts. In addition to the manuscript documents, which were written as guides to mantic processes and which have been found recently, there are some material objects which were used for these purposes. Moreover, extant literature includes prescriptions and rules for the methods to be used, essays which set out to discredit the practices and in one case a spirited defense of the professional standards that were set. Finally, it may be noted that the establishment of officials included specialists in these arts.[61]

Four general characteristics may be observed in the mantic practices of this time: the concentration on linear patterns; the concern with time; the tendency to standardize; and the interplay of intuitive and intellectual considerations.

As in other cultures, so in Chinese practice linear patterns readily lent themselves to interpretation as answers to a question. They are seen in divination in the cracks that were induced to appear on turtles' shells or animal bones, or in the formation of set lines or hexagrams. Those who consulted oracles could discern the answers to their questions in the shapes and configurations of clouds or comets, or possibly in the natural patterns formed on the earth. The preoccupation with time stands out in the high proportion of questions known to have been put to these sources of wisdom that were concerned with the timing of a religious or social event, or of an activity contemplated by a king or official.

In nearly all the mantic practices that are known for this time, it is possible to see how a measure of standardization set in. The use of shells and bones as early as the Shang period shows that some attention was being paid to using the material economically and to setting out questions and answers systematically. The habit of posing the same question in two ways, one positive and one negative, likewise reveals a measure of systematization. An element of mechanical consultation may perhaps be traced in the compilation of guides for use of the milfoil, stalks of the yarrow plant, that are now incorporated in the *Book of changes;* the preparation of elaborate tables that were used in other procedures argues that much of the process had become a matter of routine rather than faith. The interplay between intuitive and intellectual elements is seen as the

61 For almanacs used in mantic processes, see Jao and Tseng, *Yün-meng Ch'in-chien jih-shu yen-chiu*. For material objects such as diviners' boards, see Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, pp. 75f. and pp. 204–05. *HS* 30, pp. 1770f., lists items present in the imperial collection of books which concerned divination. For the exemption of books on this subject from the proscription of 214 B.C., see Chapter 1 above, p. 70. A full set of prescriptions for use in divination with turtle shells is given in Ch'u Shao-sun's addendum to *SC* 128, pp. 3238f. For a defense of the practice, see *SC* 127, pp. 3215f. For the establishment of official posts for specialists, see *HS* 19A, p. 726; and Hans Bielenstein, *The bureaucracy of Han times* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 19.

vision of the seer, with his inexplicable powers of understanding natural artificial signs, merges with the arguments and speculations with which the philosophers discussed these matters. From mantic practices such as the cast of the milfoil stalks or the observation of the earth's configurations there arose some of the most original contributions to Chinese metaphysics. Divination and the consultation of oracles formed a meeting place for religion, philosophy, and science.

Methods

The principal methods used in mantic processes were already centuries old by the Ch'in and Han periods. Cracks were induced to appear on turtle shells or animal bones, and from the circumstances in which the cracks appeared, or from their shape, the specialist would pronounce the answer to the question at issue and an appropriate decision would be taken. Probably this method had arisen as a result of sacrificial practice. It has been suggested that when the bones of sacrificial animals were raked out of the ashes, already marked by cracks, these were interpreted as signs of particular events. From the spontaneous production of such cracks from the burnt offerings there developed the deliberate attempt to produce them on other bones or shells solely for mantic purposes. Somewhat anachronistically, it was explained that by virture of their age, turtles had become a repository for wisdom which could be consulted by the traditional method.

Although there are a number of accounts of incidents in which divination of this type was practiced during the Han period, none of the surviving shells or bones that were used for the purpose have been dated in Ch'in or Han. A special chapter of the *Shih-chi* includes guidance for the procedure to be adopted. It lists the types of questions that may properly be put to the shells and bones, and it describes the forms of the cracks that appear.[62]

The second principal method of divination was that of casting the milfoil stalks of the yarrow plant. Possibly the virtue of the plant was again held to lie in its longevity, and in its production of a multiplicity of stems. It seems justifiable to assume that by Han times the method of consultation was comparable with that in use today; out of a total of fifty stalks, forty-nine are divided and subdivided into groups, and depending on the random way in which this is accomplished, the diviner forms one of sixty-four written patterns of six lines, or hexagrams. These are then interpreted

62 For the process used, see Keightley, *Sources of Shang history*, Chapter 1. For the qualities and age ascribed to the turtle, see *SC* 128, pp. 3225–26, 3235; *HNT* 14, p. 18b; *LH* 14 ("Chuang-liu"), p. 619 (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. II, p. 108).

as having a bearing on the question that had been put and as indicating whether or not a proposed action would be successful.[63]

From this practice there arose the compilation of manuals that a diviner could consult, and one of these, which dates from perhaps the eighth century B.C., forms the earliest part of the extant *Book of changes*. Already in the early texts it is possible that some attempt was being made at an intellectual analysis of the procedure and its effects, and the mere fact that manuals wete being used suggests that an intuitive element was giving place to an intellectual factor. In the following centuries we find that the pithy sayings of the *Changes*, formulaic though they were, were being quoted dogmatically in the belief that they were statements of ultimate truth. By the Ch'in and Han periods, the meaning of these formulaic sentences had long been forgotten, and a number of essays had appeared in an attempt to explain their esoteric meaning. Some of those attempts were highly anachronistic, for they took the form of reconciling the words of an age-old text with current theories of the working of the world, such as that of *yin-yang*. Some of the essays included straight explanatory statements of a philosophical nature. Early copies of such texts that have been found in the course of recent excavation date from about 200 B.C.[64]

Feng-chiao (the corners of the winds) is the term used to denote one of the most common forms of oracular consultation of the Han period. It depended on observation of the direction of the winds, the quarter from which and the time when they arose, and the speed or degree of violence with which they were blowing. From such natural patterns it could be determined what lay in store; or they could give warning of the occurrence of an incident such as armed robbery or the outbreak of fire.

The winds were regularly consulted as harbingers of the future at dawn on New Year's Day. They were described by Ts'ai Yung (ca. A.D. 175) as being "the pronounced commands of Heaven, the means of conveying instructions to man." A number of leading men in Chinese thought and government, including Chang Heng and Li Ku, and others such as Cheng Hsüan, whose chief claim to fame lay in their regular education and their devotion to classical learning, were also well versed in the mysteries of

63 For the method of using the stalks, see *HNT* 8, p. 1b; and *HNT* 17, p. 3a (notes); *LH* 24 ("Pu-shih"), pp. 998 note (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 184f.). For the value of the yarrow plant, see *SC* 128, pp. 3225–26. For early stages in the evolution of the hexagrams and trigrams, see Chang Cheng-lang, "Shih shih Chou Ch'u ch'ing-t'ung ch'i ming-wen chung ti i kua," *KKHP*, 1980.4, 403–15; and Chang Ya-ch'u and Liu Yü, "Ts'ung Shang Chou pa-kua shu-tzu fu-hao t'an shih-fa ti chi ko wen-t'i," *KK*, 1981.2, 155–63.

64 For the copy on silk, found at Ma-wang-tui, see Michael Loewe, "Manuscripts found recently in China: A preliminary survey," *TP*, 63:2–3 (1977), 117–18. For a transcription, see Ma-wang-tui Han-mu po-shu cheng-li hsiao-tsu, "Ma-wang-tui po-shu 'Liu-shih-ssu kua' shih-wen," *WW* 1984.3, 1–8.

the corners of the winds. The practice gave rise to a literature, and in Later Han there may have been an establishment of officials who were responsible for watching the winds. After the Han period, *feng-chiao* divination became associated with military techniques.[65]

There are other examples of oracles that were thought to reside in natural phenomena, if man would but take the trouble to look for the signs. These included the patterns formed by the clouds, and the vapors thought to emanate from the sun, moon, and stars.[66] Prognostications could be made not only from these observations, but also on the basis of the shapes of comets, as may be seen in a surviving manuscript.[67]

Several other terms or practices illustrate the preoccupation with mantic inquiries to determine the most suitable timing for an action. The expression *k'an-yü*, whose original meaning is not clear, refers in Han times specifically to a method of fixing on the appropriate moment for a domestic or other type of occasion. Possibly this method depended on the use of an instrument. By the beginning of the Christian era some methods of inquiry had already given rise to a manual, and by the seventh century quite a number of tables had been compiled setting out the chronological sequences involved in this type of consultation.[68] Thus, the manuscript strips from Shui-hu-ti (Hupei), which date from just before the unification, include a well-preserved and extensive set of tables in the form of almanacs. These prescribe the particular characteristics of days of the calendar, in sequence, according to a recognized scheme or cycle. By consulting documents of this type, it would be possible to ensure that a day selected for a wedding, funeral, or other occasion would be suitable, and to predict its likely consequences.[69]

65 For watching the winds for the New Year, see *SC* 25, p. 1243 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. III, pp. 300f.); *SC* 27, p. 1340 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. III, pp. 397f.). For Ts'ai Yung's references, see *HHS* 60B, p. 1992. Entries in *HS* 30, pp. 1759, 1768 possibly refer to the subject, and other literary works are listed in *Sui shu* 34, pp. 1026f. For the establishment of officials, see *HHS* (tr.) 25, p. 3572 note 2.

66 See A. F. P. Hulsewé, "Watching the vapours: an ancient Chinese technique of prognostication," *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens/Hamburg*, 125 (1979), 40–49.

67 See Michael Loewe, "The Han view of comets," *BMFEA*, 52 (1980), 1–31. Appearances of comets could equally well be included among the strange events regarded as omens and treated as portents; see pp. 679, 710f. below.

68 Since the nineteenth century at least, the term *k'an-yü* has been used coterminously with *feng-shui*, but there is good reason to show that in the Han period *k'an-yü* was concerned with the choice of a fortunate time rather than with consideration of the fortunate qualities of a site. For entries of books on the subject, see *HS* 30, p. 1768; *Sui shu* 34, pp. 1035–36.

69 The total of 1,155 complete strips and 80 fragments found at Shui-hu-ti included two groups of documents concerned with mantic practices. One of these groups comprised 166 strips, inscribed somewhat unusually on both sides; the other group comprised 257 strips. For sets of almanacs, see, e.g., strips nos. 730–42 and 743–54 in "Yün-meng Shui-hu-ti Ch'in mu pien-hsieh tsu," *Yün-meng Shui-hu-ti Ch'in mu* (Peking, 1981), Plates CXVI-CXVIII; and Jao and Tseng, *Yün-meng Ch'in chien jih-shu yen-chiu*, Plates 1–3.

Finally, several examples are known of the diviner's board (*shih*) from 165 B.C. onward. This sophisticated instrument may be regarded as the ancestor of the modern *feng-shui* compass. It was probably intended to indicate the coincidence of the prevailing rhythms and positions of the heavenly bodies and the position of the earth, and to relate these to the personal circumstances of the inquirer and his question.[70]

Questions and topics of consultation

A passage in the *Songs of the south*, which may perhaps be dated in the middle of the third century B.C., records how the famous statesman of Ch'u, named Ch'ü Yüan, consulted a diviner who was a master of the techniques used with turtle and milfoil. The questions that he put were of a somewhat lofty nature, concerning matters of principle or ethical problems and values. The diviner answered that he was unable to use his skills to solve questions of that type.[71]

At a more mundane level, divination was performed to obtain answers to questions of five major types. There were those of fact or probability, such as whether a report of the activities of robbers was true, or whether a pestilence would break out, or what chances there were of rain. Second, on some occasions the diviner's skills were invoked to decide whether or not an action was suitable and would be likely to meet with success, such as whether it would be right to remain in an official post or to withdraw, or whether or not a military expedition would be successful. Third, as has been noted, great importance was attached to determining whether a proposed time would be suitable for a sacrifice, wedding, or funeral. A fourth type of problem concerned the choice of an appropriate location for the residence of the living or as a final resting place for the dead. Finally, there are examples of questions where a choice of alternatives was involved, such as which one of several officers should be appointed as a general to lead a campaign, or who should be named as the successor to a kingdom.[72]

On at least two occasions, future emperors resorted to divination before agreeing to accede to the throne. It is, however, possible that the decisions had already been made, and that they were merely going through these formalities in order to display ostensible support for their cause from occult powers. In 180 B.C. Liu Heng, king of Tai, duly complied with this procedure; and in

70 See Donald J. Harper, "The Han cosmic board," *Early China*, 4 (1978–79), 1–10; Christopher Cullen, "Some further points on the *shih*," *Early China*, 6 (1980–81), 31–46; Donald J. Harper, "The Han cosmic board: A response to Christopher Cullen," *Early China*, 6 (1980–81), 47–56; Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, pp. 75f.

71 *Ch'u-tz'u* 6, pp. 1a *et seq*. (Hawkes, *Songs of the south*, pp. 88f.).

72 For a list of possible questions, see *SC* 128, pp. 3241f. (Ch'u Shao-sun's addendum).

A.D. 220 the future emperor of Wei also resorted to such techniques. On each occasion it may be surmised that the authority of the holy shells or stalks stood as a powerful support against the claims of rival contenders. The same precaution was taken by the statesmen and officials who brought about the enthronement of Liu Ping-i, the future Hsüan-ti, in 74 B.C.

On another occasion, diviners of a number of different schools and skills were consulted to determine whether or not a day suggested for Wu-ti's wedding would be suitable. In this instance, however, the specialists were unable to reach agreement; some advised against the day in question, others gave their approval. Unfortunately, there is no indication of which of Wu-ti's spouses was concerned in this weighty problem, and it is therefore not possible to trace what future awaited her. Wu-ti decided to go ahead with his plans, and his bride may or may not have had a happy future; there is no means of assessing the quality of the different types of experts who had been consulted. On at least two occasions in Later Han, we hear of a resort to mantic methods to determine the likely destiny of girls whose admission to the imperial palace was under active consideration. It was a regular practice for the emperor to divine by means of turtle and milfoil in the month of the winter solstice to ascertain the prospects for the coming year.[73]

Omens

In the consultation of oracles, attention was drawn to the presence of certain features as part of the regular order of nature. Omens, by contrast, are in a slightly different category, being events that conflict with the regular order of nature and that are so conspicuous they cannot be ignored. Events of this type necessarily caused alarm and provoked the question of what consequences they presaged. They might include incidents such as an earthquake or a solar eclipse; they could take the form of a disaster that affected a particularly sensitive area, such as a fire which broke out within the palace precincts; or they could take the form of untoward and inexplicable happenings to man-made objects, such as the spontaneous opening of a barred gateway.

The Standard Histories include a number of explanations of these events submitted by different specialists with their own particular outlook. Possibly the appearance of a comet, itself a rare incident and an apparent irregularity, should be classified as an omen. The manuscript to which

73 For divination prior to accession to the throne, see *HS* 4, p. 106 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 225); *HS* 74, p. 3143; *SKC* 2 (Wei 2), p. 75. For the suitability of a wedding day for Wu-ti, see *SC* 127, p. 3222. For the choice of suitable girls for the palace, see *HHS* 10A, pp. 407–08; and *HHS* 10B, p. 438. For the ceremony of the winter solstice, see *HNT* 5, pp. 14a–14b.

reference has already been made and which carries diagrams of different types of comets also carries a short text with each one that suggests the consequences of its appearance. Considerable attention was also paid to comets in the histories.[74] Reference will be made below to the way in which events of this type could be explained within a cosmic framework and how they could form the focus for political criticism.[75]

Contemporary views of mantic practices

Considerable divergence may be seen in the views regarding divination, oracles, and omens during the pre-Han and Han periods. Some writers accepted the beliefs and practices as valid and accorded full credit to the practitioners. Others, who were ready to make use of these beliefs for political purposes, may or may not have been sincere in their protestations of faith in the truth of the predictions. Some thinkers were able to combine a scholastic training or a scientific outlook with a trust in the shells and the stalks. There were also those who criticized the practices because of their deleterious moral effects or because of their inherent intellectual weakness.

The *Han-fei-tzu* includes a warning that one of the roads to the ruin of a state lies in dependence on these methods to choose a time for action, in the belief that the success of that action would thus be assured. This is coupled with a warning against excessive service to the holy spirits and reliance on divination by shells and milfoil. The warning of the *Songs of the south* that certain questions are inappropriate for divination is echoed in complaints of the *Huai-nan-tzu* and the *Discourses on salt and iron* against excessive resort to the practice. But the *Huai-nan-tzu* also carries extensive information regarding the choice of lucky and the avoidance of unlucky days, apparently without critical overtones. That some mantic texts were excluded from the ban imposed on literature in 214 B.C. is perhaps surprising on the part of a regime whose first priorities lay in realistic and material considerations. The Han government included specialist officials with responsibility for mantic practices on the same level as professional doctors, prayer makers and musicians; in official terms, the dynasty trusted in divination.[76]

In a somewhat amusing anecdote, the *Shih-chi* includes a spirited defense of the professional diviners, who apparently practiced in a special lane of

74 For examples of opinions offered by Tung Chung-shu, Hsia-hou Shih-ch'ang, Liu Hsiang, Ching Fang, and others, see *HS* 27A, pp. 1326–34; *HS* 27B (1), p. 1372. For comets, see Loewe, "The Han view of comets." 75 See pp. 710f. below.

76 *Han-fei-tzu* 5 ("Wang cheng"), p. 267; *HNT* 6, p. 13b; *HNT* 8, p. 1b; *YTL* 6 ("San pu tsu"), p. 204. See also note 61 above.

Ch'ang-an. They are shown as being men of unquestioned integrity, with the proved success of their methods to their credit. To the questions put by two politicians, including Chia I, a famous member of the profession expostulated that he and his colleagues had a far more just sense of honor and integrity than many who engaged in public life; he claimed that professional procedures were marked by considerable attention to decorum.[77]

That Wang Mang believed in the efficacy of the diviner's board, or at least that he wished to show that he believed in it, is apparent from an account of an incident in which he consulted this device just before the end of his dynasty. The *Po-hu t'ung* pays considerable attention to the use of turtles and milfoil and the correct procedures that should be adopted. The book defends the practice of consultation on the grounds that it tends to prevent decisions being taken on personal or arbitrary grounds.

In addition, several highly practical men, who were concerned with scientific, technological, or political matters, showed that they trusted the processes. These included Wang Ching, the water engineer, who tried to eliminate apparent inconsistencies that gave rise to doubt, and Chang Heng the astronomer. As against their views, K'ung Hsi, a descendant of Confucius, refused to be dissuaded from taking up an appointment because the prognostications were not fortunate; he believed that destiny derived from the individual rather than from divination. When Shun-ti (r. A.D. 125–144) proposed to decide by mantic means which of his favorite women should be elevated to empress, he was rebuked by those who did not trust the process to select someone of the right qualifications.[78]

Such expressions of various points of view are recorded somewhat incidentally in the biographical accounts of leading personalities. More specific attempts to discuss the value of mantic processes may be found in the works of Wang Ch'ung and Wang Fu. These two writers lived at different times, and the different character of their periods possibly affected their outlooks.

Wang Ch'ung (A.D. 27–ca. 100) had lived through the reestablishment and consolidation of imperial power and had witnessed its extension and its successful achievements. He wrote as a skeptic, alarmed by the easy intellectual assumptions of some of his contemporaries at a time of material strength; his criticism of mantic processes is based on intellectual principles. He found that both the way in which divination was being practiced and the interpretations put on the signs were inconsistent. He protested

77 *SC* 127, pp. 3215f.

78 *HS* 99C, p. 4190 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 463); *Po-hu t'ung* 6, pp. 3a et seq. For Wang Ching, see *HHS* 76, p. 2466. For Chang Heng, see *HHS* 59, pp. 1911, 1918. For K'ung Hsi, see *HHS* 79A, p. 2563. For the incident involving Shun-ti, see *HHS* 44, p. 1505.

that neither the shells nor the stalks could really be thought to possess superhuman powers or wisdom; nor could Heaven or Earth be seen to possess the material means or organs whereby they could convey their will to mankind, as was claimed on behalf of some of the methods in use. Above all, Wang Ch'ung could not believe that divination was a means of ascertaining the will of Heaven or other superior beings. Such a belief assumed that Heaven or other bodies were willing to interfere in human lives and to bring mankind good or bad fortune; Wang Ch'ung saw no evidence to support such a proposition.[79]

Wang Fu (ca. 90–165) lived some fifty years after Wang Ch'ung, at a time when the government was under attack for its harshness, oppression, favoritism, and extravagance. He wrote as a social or political critic rather than as a rationalist, and one of his main concerns was to call for a return to higher moral standards. Unlike Wang Ch'ung, Wang Fu believed in the validity of some mantic practices; his main criticism was directed against their excessive use and the abuses and corruption to which they gave rise. Above all, he decried reliance on divination if this discouraged the consideration of an issue on other grounds, notably the moral criteria for the proposed action. While Wang Ch'ung would have preferred to eliminate all mantic processes, Wang Fu would have been ready to countenance those that were used with discretion.[80]

A further view was expressed by Chung-ch'ang T'ung, born ca. 180 and writing right at the end of the Han period. He was deeply disturbed by the collapse of confidence, the breakdown of political cohesion, and the social disruption that he saw around him. He wrote as a humanist, calling for the need to base political decisions on human evaluations and judgments. He castigated groups such as shamans, diviners, or prayer makers for practicing gross deception. Those who believed in the ways of Heaven while ignoring the affairs of man were spreading confusion and bewilderment; their employment could even lead to the overthrow of the dynasty. For once a sovereign persists in appointing his officials by virtue of favoritism rather than individual qualities, no amount of choosing an appropriate moment for action, of consulting the shells or stalks, or of sacrificing animals will prevent his downfall.[81]

79 *LH* 24 ("Chi-jih"), pp. 985f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. II, pp. 393f.); and *LH* 24 ("Pu-shih"), pp. 994f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 182f.).

80 Wang Fu discusses various aspects of divination and related topics in no less than four chapters of the *Ch'ien-fu lun*, i.e., *CFL* 6 ("Pu-lieh," "Wu-lieh," and "Hsiang-lieh"), pp. 291–314, and *CFL* 7 ("Meng-lieh"), pp. 315–23.

81 *Ch'ün-shu chih-yao* 45, p. 26b; Étienne Balazs, "Political philosophy and social crisis at the end of the Han dynasty," in his *Civilization and bureaucracy: Variations on a theme*, trans. H. M. Wright, ed. Arthur F. Wright (New Haven and London, 1964), pp. 213f.

THE UNIVERSE AND ITS ORDER

Space, time, and the heavens

As in other cultures, so in China there is evidence to show that from early times man was concerned with problems such as the shape of the universe that lay about him, and the place of the earth in the heavens and its relation to other bodies. Mythology alludes to a number of ideas that arose in this regard, such as that of a series of heights to be scaled successively in order to reach the never-never land; or the ladder whereby the gods made their way from one realm to another. According to a well-known tale, in a battle that took place between two superhuman beings, one of the supports of the heavens was struck down; the relative balance between the heavens and the earth was upset, with the heavens tilted toward the northwest. An allegorical poem in the *Songs of the south* that takes the form of a series of questions or riddles addresses itself to many aspects of these questions.[82]

Intellectual explanations of the earth's place in space and its relation to the heavenly bodies took three principal forms. According to one theory, which was held in the second century B.C., the heavens rotated once daily, forming a dome over the earth; they carried the constellations with them, and the Pole Star formed the center around which the whole revolved. This was known as the Dome of the universe (*kai-t'ien*) theory. Perhaps a century later, a different theory, known as *hun-t'ien*, was being voiced. According to this theory, the heavens were conceived as an extension in space that surrounded the earth on all sides; the circumference of the heavens was divisible into 365 1/4 degrees. Toward the end of the Han period there arose yet another theory. This recognized that the heavens extended infinitely, with the constellations moving around at will and independently.[83]

It is hardly surprising that the Chinese, in common with other peoples of other cultures, fastened considerable attention on the stars and their movements. For the stars and their regular habits are the most permanent features of the natural world that man can observe, and by associating his own world and its changes with them, man can strive to attain a connection with some scheme that will outlast his own brief existence.

This connection was made all the stronger by the prevailing Chinese view of the universe as a unitary entity. There was no rigid division

82 *HNT* 4, p. 4a (Loewe, *Ideas of life and death*, p. 51); *Ch'u-tz'u* 3 ("T'ien wen") (Hawkes, *Songs of the south*, pp. 45f.). For a further example of an exercise in mythical geography, see *HNT* 4 (Major, "Topography and cosmology in early Han thought").

83 Joseph Needham et al., *Science and civilisation in China* (Cambridge, 1954–), Vol. III, pp. 210f.; Christopher Cullen, "Joseph Needham on Chinese astronomy," *Past and present*, 87 (1980), 39–53; Loewe, *Ideas of life and death*, pp. 54f.

between the heavens and their bodies, the earth and its creations, and man and his activities. Within the single cosmos, the happenings of any one of these realms, so far from being unconnected with those of the other two, bore a direct relationship with them. Some might even say that this relationship was so strong that it ensured that events of a similar type would ensue on earth, for example, in order to correspond with those that had taken place in the skies. The idea of this interaction came to carry great significance in dynastic and political terms.[84]

The connection between the heavens and the earth and the recognition that the circular heavens surrounded the square earth on all sides was symbolized in iconography. At least one religious site, probably the P'i-yung, is known to have been designed as a circle that enclosed a square. The habit of impressing such a pattern into the bricks with which some tombs were constructed may also have been intended as a reminder of this universal truth. Other reminders of permanent features, such as constellations, likewise feature in the decorative designs found in Han tombs.[85]

There was no clear-cut distinction between astronomy and astrology, between an attempt to observe, measure, and calculate the operations of the heavenly bodies, and attempts to link such movements with human activities and destinies. A considerable body of literature on these subjects that had been compiled before the start of the Christian era included a number of works that were probably illustrated with diagrams. The treatise on astronomy and astrology that is included in the *Han shu*, and that was probably compiled by Ma Hsü sometime before A.D. 150, lists entries for 118 named constellations and 783 stars. A surviving manuscript of an earlier date, which had been buried in a tomb sometime before 168 B.C., gives in tabular form the times and locations of the rising and setting of the planets for the years 246 to 177 B.C.[86]

Documentation of this type testifies to the careful observation practiced by Chinese astronomers and their meticulous maintenance of records over the years. The illustrations in an unofficial document of no less than twenty-nine shapes of different comets, which could not possibly have been observed within the lifetime of a single individual, indicates the attention paid to these inquiries in a private capacity. Perhaps of greater importance

84 Hans Bielenstein, "An interpretation of the portents of the Ts'ien-Han-shu," *BMFEA*, 22 (1950), 127–43. See also pp. 710f. below.

85 For the P'i-yung, see p. 665 above. For stars and constellations in iconography, see individual entries in Käte Finsterbusch, *Verzeichnis und Motivindex der Han-Darstellungen* (Wiesbaden, 1966, 1971); and Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, pp. 112f.

86 *HS* 30, pp. 1763–65, lists twenty-two entries for works on subjects of astronomy, giving the number of specialists at twenty-one. A high proportion of these works were written on scrolls, thus facilitating the inclusion of illustrations. For Ma Hsü, compiler of *HS* 26, see *HHS* (tr.) 10, p. 3215. For the document from Ma-wang-tui, see Loewe, "Manuscripts," pp. 122–23.

was the establishment of officials such as the director of astrology (*t'ai-shih ling*), whose responsibilities included the task of keeping these records in the imperial archives.

Such records depended on skilled observations, and it may be assumed that the accuracy of these improved as more and more sophisticated instruments were evolved. The use of gnomons was known as early as the fourth or third century B.C. During the first century B.C., Keng Shou-ch'ang, known in another context for his support of the state's interference in the Chinese economy, developed what was known as the "instrument of the red path" (the equator, *ch'ih-tao i*). This was followed in A.D. 102 by the production of the "instrument of the yellow path" (the ecliptic, *huang-tao i*) by Chia K'uei. Shortly afterward, Chang Heng fashioned his armillary sphere (A.D. 132). During Later Han, the main imperial observatory, which housed the necessary instruments, was situated in the Ling-t'ai, or Spiritual Terrace, which lay beyond the walls of Lo-yang on the south side.[87]

From at least the fifth century B.C., divisions of the ecliptic had been identified, being related to certain constellations and known by their names. These twenty-eight Lodges, sometimes called Mansions, varied considerably in extension, being measured in degrees of the 365 1/4 degree circle. It was known that the ecliptic cut obliquely across the imaginary celestial equator, and in ca. A.D. 85 the degree of obliquity was measured by Fu An. Although, some eight decades previously, Liu Hsiang is said to have made a start in understanding and explaining the causes of eclipses, these continued to be regarded as anomalous events, or omens that called for interpretation and application to political affairs.

In addition to the concept of the heavens in terms of the twenty-eight Lodges, there was a further understanding of the heavens as being divided into twelve equal segments, based on the movements of the planet Jupiter. By way of emphasizing the correspondence between the heavens and the earth, some astronomers related these twelve divisions to specific terrestrial divisions of the Han empire; they thus implied that activities in one segment of the heavens could expect to be matched by similar activities in the corresponding region on earth. Yet a further view saw the heavens as

87 For the development of instruments, see Henri Maspero, "Les instruments astronomiques des Chinois au temps des Han," in *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques*, Vol. VI (Brussels, 1939), pp. 183–370; and Needham, *SCC*, Vol. III, pp. 284f. For Keng Shou-ch'ang, see Nancy Lee Swann, *Food and money in ancient China* (Princeton, 1950), pp. 192f. For Chang Heng and the armillary sphere, see Needham, *SCC*, Vol. III, pp. 217f. For the observatory, see Hans Bielenstein, "Lo-yang in Later Han times," *BMFEA*, 48 (1976), 62f.; and Wang Zhongshu, *Han civilization*, pp. 38f. and fig. 42 (erroneously described in the caption as applying to Northern Wei, but in fact applying to Later Han).

consisting of five Palaces which corresponded with the Five Elements or Phases thought to control all manner of being.[88]

The measurement of time and the promulgation of a calendar, which are closely associated with astronomical science, were also a concern of imperial officials. We do not know when full account was first taken of the equinoxes and solstices, to which an early reference is made in the *Book of documents*.[89] Most, if not all, of the states of the pre-imperial period maintained their own calendars, which were issued by authority of their officials; of these, the royal calendar of Chou was sometimes accorded a higher place than the calendars of other states.

In their turn, the imperial governments accepted the responsibility, or insisted on the right, to issue authoritative calendars. They were needed for the calculation of all types of schedules in the administration of the empire, such as those for conscripting labor, or dating the appointment of officials or the bestowal of orders of honor. Accurate dating was essential for the multiplicity of documents that were being circulated by the imperial civil service, and for determining the correct times for festivals and the seasonal work of the fields. It was also necessary to see that certain tasks of both officials and farmers were timed so that they took place at the precise moment that corresponded with the requirements of the cycles and rhythms discussed below.[90]

Preparation of the luni-solar calendar was liable to adjustment and refinement as and when observations and calculations became more accurate. The specialists who performed the task needed to determine a number of variables, such as the point at which the year was deemed to start, or the position in the year when it might be necessary to include an intercalary, or thirteenth, month. In addition, the year comprised some months which were long, at thirty days, and some which were short, at twenty-nine days, and it was necessary to prescribe which would be long and which short.

The system that had been in use in the kingdom of Ch'in from at least 265 B.C., whereby the year started in the tenth month, remained in use until a new calendar was introduced in 104 B.C., with the year starting from the first month. A further change took place under Wang Mang, under the guidance of Liu Hsin. The final change known to have taken place in the Han period was in A.D. 85, when it was thought that a new calendar, named *Ssu-fen li*, was more accurate than its predecessor. Sometimes these adjustments were accompanied by ideological considerations.

88 *HS* 26, pp. 1273f.; Needham, *SCC*, Vol. III, pp. 402f.

89 Bernhard Karlgren, "The Book of documents," *BMFEA*, 22 (1950), 3; this part of the work may perhaps be dated in the fourth or even the third century B.C. See also Needham, *SCC*, Vol. III, p. 188.

90 For the cycle of the *wu-hsing*, see pp. 690f. below.

They could be used to demonstrate a dynasty's self-confidence, or its desire to inaugurate a new era, or to associate itself with an earlier regime.[91]

During the Ch'in period and the first decades of Han, years were enumerated from the start of each emperor's reign. A slight change came about when Wen-ti established a second starting point during his reign, in 163 B.C. The years of Ching-ti's reign were counted in the first place from the year following his accession (156 B.C.); then from a second starting point, in 149 B.C.; and finally from a third starting point, in 143 B.C. At some time during Wu-ti's reign (141–87 B.C.), a completely new system was introduced.

An appropriate expression was chosen; it may have signified a fortunate event, the successful accomplishment of an action by the emperor, or it may have described the ideal state of the world that the government claimed to be translating into reality. These two-character expressions were taken as the reign titles for designated years, and succeeding years were numbered accordingly (for example, the term *Yüan-feng*, the primary *feng* ceremony, was chosen for 110 B.C., which became known as Yüan-feng 1; 109 B.C. became Yüan-feng 2, and so on). This system was applied to all years from Wu-ti's reign onward, and served as a propagandist message whereby the government could impart its intentions or lay claim to its achievements.[92]

Individual days in the month were defined by reference to the sixty terms of the sexagenary cycle; this was formed by combining the characters of two very old series possessing, respectively, twelve and ten members each. The sixty terms could thus cover the whole of one long and one short month (fifty-nine days) and the first day of a third month; usually it fell more evenly over three consecutive months. By Later Han, this system was being outmoded by a straightforward enumeration of the days of each month from 1 to 30 or from 1 to 29.

The passage of time was measured by a simple water clock, or by a dial on which two gnomons indicated the passing of the sun. In general, the total period of the day and night was divided into twelve hours but division into sixteen or possibly eighteen hours may have been current at a popular level until Wang Mang's time. The twelve hours of the day and night were subdivided into a total of 100 short periods. A proposal to adopt 120 in place of the 100 subdivisions accompanied the introduction of a new reign title for a few months in 5 B.C., but it was not accepted thereafter.

91 Needham, *SCC*, Vol. III, pp. 194f.; Nathan Sivin, "Cosmos and computation in early Chinese mathematical astronomy," *TP*, 55:1–3 (1969), 1–73; Bodde, *Festivals*, pp. 27f., 145f.; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, p. 32.

92 For the institution of this system, see Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 121f.

Attention to accurate timekeeping is a conspicuous feature of the records of administration, both civil and military, of which fragments have been found in the northwestern parts of the empire.[93]

Cycles of being: the sixty-four changes and the Five Phases

Two major systems of thought which had emerged before the imperial period set out to show how the all too obvious phenomena of change, which could apparently wreak havoc on human destiny and human intentions, were in reality parts of a constant order of being. Provided that man could comprehend that order, he would be able to reconcile himself to the changes that would necessarily take place around him; and he might even take some precautionary measures to avoid some of the dangers. One of these systems derived from the practice of divination by means of yarrow stalks; the other, from a scientific approach to the world by means of observation and hypothesis. Both systems developed to a conspicuous degree in the centuries immediately before the unification, and both were taken to much further lengths during the Han period.

When divination was practised with yarrow stalks,[94] the process involved the construction of one of sixty-four possible hexagrams. This system had been in use for several centuries, and by the Warring States period much of the original lore had been forgotten. In particular, although some very ancient texts (the *t'uan*, judgment, and the *yao*, lines, of the extant *Book of changes*) were being used to interpret the signs that had been produced, they were written in language that was formulaic and largely obsolete, with the result that their full meaning had long been lost. This did not prevent the citation of these sentences by way of scriptural authority with which to support a decision that a monarch or statesman might wish to take, as is shown in a number of incidents recorded for pre-imperial history. Just as it was possible to assign an arbitrary interpretation to these texts for those purposes, so were they giving rise to controversy regarding their political implications.

In addition, the concept of the hexagrams themselves was undergoing a change. Instead of standing as the signs produced in a process of divination, they were acquiring a symbolic value of their own. Each one was to be

93 For sun dials, see Needham, *SCC*, Vol. III, pp. 302f. For the importance attached to timing, see Michael Loewe, *Records of Han administration* (Cambridge, 1967), Vol. I, pp. 43f., 126, and 160 note 91. For the abortive attempt at change in 5 B.C., see Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 2, 78f.; and Chapter 2 above, p. 222. For the division of the night and day into twelve, sixteen, or eighteen hours, see Yü Hao-liang, "Ch'in chien 'jih shu' chi shih chi yüeh chu wen-t'i," in *Yün-meng Ch'in chien yen-chiu*, ed. Chung-hua shu-chü pien-chi-pu (Peking, 1981), pp. 351–57.

94 See pp. 675f. above.

an indication of one of a number of situations that replaced its predecessor, prevailing in sequence in the cosmos. The hexagrams were thus valuable signs of the characteristics and quality of a given moment of time and its suitability for a proposed action. It is by no means clear how far this development had advanced by the Ch'in and Han periods, but it carried with it a complete change in the nature of divination by this process.

Diviners had begun to cast the milfoil stalks of the yarrow plant to seek a simple answer to a simple question; in its later stages, the process revealed the point in a sequence of stages whereby the interlocking universe of heavens, earth, and man was operating. Because failure to conform with that state might lead to the failure of a human plan, divination and the production of hexagrams, with their enhanced symbolism, could provide an individual or an emperor with wise and trustworthy advice before he took a decision. The hexagrams had become symbols of a rule of life. Their meaning was explained by regarding them as two trigrams, each highly charged with esoteric power, whose juxtaposition indicated how far the different cosmic forces happened to be in balance at a given moment of time.[95]

A further consequence that followed the perplexity encountered in consulting the "judgment" and the "lines" was destined to affect Chinese thought in a major way. A number of writers, whose names are not now known, composed a series of notes or essays in order to explain the underlying and esoteric meaning of those texts. They sought to set out as clearly as possible their own understanding of the universal truths that they comprised; and they did so by means of the written language that was current in the Warring States or the Ch'in and Han periods. Those writings that have survived are known collectively as the Ten Wings, and they now form an integral part of the *Book of changes*. It cannot be known exactly when these documents were first compiled. Some parts are included in one of the manuscripts found at Ma-wang-tui, dating from before 168 B.C.; other parts of the Ten Wings may have reached their present form as a result of redaction during the Han period.

Deriving as they do from different hands, the Ten Wings cannot be expected to set out the terms of a single philosophical system. Their unity lies in their approach to the single problem of attempting to coordinate the system of the sixty-four symbols and their cycle with other major principles. They are written in a style very different from that of the obsolete language of the judgment and the lines; they attempt to state their message

95 For the *Book of changes*, see Hellmut Wilhelm, *Change: Eight lectures on the I ching* (Princeton, 1973; London, 1975); Hellmut Wilhelm, *Heaven, earth and man in the Book of changes* (Seattle and London, 1977); and Julian K. Shchutskii, *Researches on the I ching* (London and Henley, 1980).

explicitly, while the gnomic utterances of the earlier texts could by this stage do little but cloak a mystical truth. The *Changes* and the problems associated with it have remained a subject of inquiry by some of the most acute minds of China ever since, and have been the foundation for some of the more important attempts at metaphysical speculation in China before the twelfth century. The *Changes* have also been open for exploitation for political purposes.[96]

The idea that change takes place according to an ordered, regular, and rhythmic sequence took a different form in another system of thought, that derived from origins other than divination. By the Warring States period, two modes of thought or theories, known as that of the Five Phases (or elements, *wu-hsing*) and that of *yin-yang*, had become fused. Traditionally, Tsou Yen, a thinker of the third century B.C., is credited with reconciling a system based on five with one that fastened on two alternating forces of activity, but no details are known of this achievement. According to the theory which was evolved in these centuries, nature works in cyclical fashion. Changes are brought about by the alternate pressures of *yin* and *yang*, and that alternation operates in a series of five stages. By such means continuity is assured, through the major cycle of birth, decay, and rebirth. This cycle may be observed in all realms of the universe and in all types of activity. It is seen in the seemingly eternal movements of the heavenly bodies, and more immediately in the waxing and waning of the moon. The seasonal sprouting, flowering, decay, and renovation of plants and trees is based on the same pattern, as is the birth, death, and regeneration of the animal and human world.

The *yin-yang* and Five Phases theory entailed a number of complications and abuses that became manifest during the Han period. Once the idea of a cycle of five had been accepted, it was applied excessively, arbitrarily, and indiscriminately to all orders and manner of being. As a result, categories came to be formed in sets of five, irrespective of whether such a classification would be exhaustive or appropriate. Thus there was a tendency, or even an intellectual compulsion, to identify five seasons, directions, emotions, sensory perceptions, colors, or elements of the material world; and each one of these was assigned to the appropriate division of existence and activity that took place under the sponsorship of one of the Five Phases. For example, that phase of the cycle of being that brought about fresh growth was symbolized by wood and was manifested in spring; its sphere of activity was in the east; its representative color was green; the emotion classified

96 See Chapter 15 below, pp. 774f., for the speculations of Yang Hsiung. For the work of Wang Pi (b. A.D. 226), an early commentator on the book, see Wilhelm, *Change*, pp. 86f.; and Shchutskii, *Researches on the I ching*, p. 209. For political exploitation, see Chapter 15 below, pp. 797f.

with it was anger, and of the five organs of the human body, the spleen belonged to this category; its patron planet was Jupiter.

In addition, and quite apart from these classifications and identifications, a fundamental problem still existed. The sequence of the phases can be conceived in many different ways, and it was necessary to determine their order and the principles that such a choice involved. In practice, only two of the many possible sequences were widely accepted.[97]

Of greater importance than its adoption as a method of classification was the place that the Five Phases theory held in men's minds. It seems to have been accepted by most, if not all, of the prominent thinkers of Han as an explanation of the continuation of the world's natural sequences, including the process of creation. The truth of the theory is assumed by writers from as diverse points of view as the contributors to the *Huai-nan-tzu*, Tung Chung-shu, and Wang Ch'ung. The cycle of the Five Phases was invoked as a means of procuring intellectual support for the establishment of imperial dynasties.[98] Although there are no certain examples of its appearance in iconography before perhaps 70 B.C., by the time of Wang Mang the theory was playing a major role in public life in a number of ways.

It appears in the symbols and talismans that were often used in burial.[99] It dictated some details of the protocol of court, such as the colors chosen for official robes. In order to conform with the requirements of the theory, it was necessary to regulate punishments so that they were not carried out at a season of the year inappropriate to such actions; thus, insofar as spring was the season of growth, it was unsuitable for criminals facing the death penalty to be executed then, and it was necessary to await the season that accompanied the correct phase of the cycle, that is, winter.[100] It is not known from when, if ever, or to what degree, blind obedience to these principles had become sufficiently pervasive or compulsive to affect the conduct of government adversely.

The view that changes in the world could be understood in terms of either the known cycle of sixty-four symbols or the five stages of *yin-yang* and the Five Phases was not entirely satisfactory. It was not a complete philosophical system that could account for all events or all appearances, such as the catastrophes which manifestly broke with the established order of nature and compelled treatment as omens. Nor did this view provide for a means of communication between mankind and the holy spirits or powers that de-

97 For the Five Phases, see Chan, *A source book in Chinese philosophy*, pp. 248f.; Needham, *SCC*, Vol. II, pp. 247f., 262; Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, pp. 6f. For the order of the phases, see Chapter 13 below, pp. 737f.

98 See Chapter 1 above, pp. 77f., 96f.; Chapter 2 above, pp. 172f.; Chapter 3 above, p. 255; Chapter 5 above, p. 360. 99 See p. 724 below. 100 See Chapter 9 above, p. 522.

manded worship and appeasement. Similarly, these theories had nothing to say about a further problem that besets all mankind, the nature of death and the possibility of an afterlife. Attention will be paid below to one way in which this problem was faced with due consideration of the Five Phases.

Partly for these reasons, attempts were made to modify both theories or to reconcile them with other principles. At the close of Former Han, Yang Hsiung (53 B.C.–A.D. 18) felt that the system of sixty-four changes was not an adequate way of expressing universal truth, in view of its complexities. By this time, however, the *Book of changes* had long been adopted as one of the texts for educating officials, and it had acquired an authority that was almost scriptural.[101] Perhaps in deference to the reputation of the book, Yang Hsiung formulated a scheme that followed its pattern, with some major adjustments. He arrived at a series of eighty-one tetragrams that were likewise intended to symbolize different stages of being. In daring to challenge the established authority of one of the scriptures, Yang Hsiung was showing a remarkable degree of boldness. But his attempts to set out a more comprehensive scheme had little impact at the time.

At much the same time, another man of letters, Ching Fang, was concerned with the inherent difficulty presented by these schemes. A student of the *Changes*, he saw a need to understand the sixty-four in terms of everyday occurrences. Ching Fang had already won a considerable reputation for predicting events on the basis of observing natural climatic phenomena, and he saw the need to link such methods with a philosophical scheme. It seems that Ching Fang may have been trying to reconcile the cycle of sixty-four with the cycle of the sixty terms of the sexagenary series, and with the known regular movements of the heavenly bodies. Thanks to his outspoken advice on political matters, Ching Fang incurred the enmity of leading persons such as Shih Hsien, a eunuch favorite of Yüan-ti; he was executed at the age of forty-one in 37 B.C.[102]

101 See Chapter 2 above, p. 154. For Yang Hsiung, see Chapter 15 below, pp. 774f.

102 For Ching Fang, see *HS* 9, p. 294 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 330); *HS* 75, pp. 3160f.; and Bodde, "Chinese cosmic magic," p. 18. It is necessary to distinguish this man, whose original surname had been Li and whom we may call Ching Fang the second, from an earlier scholar of the same name, Ching Fang the first, who was also deeply concerned with the *Book of changes*, being a founder of one of the four New Text (*chin-wen*) schools of exposition (*HS* 88, pp. 3601f.). To Ching Fang the second there is attributed a text called *Ching-shih i-chuan*, which sets out to reconcile the two cycles of sixty-four and sixty in a systematic way. The text is included in collections such as the *Han Wei ts'ung-shu*, but it cannot be accepted as authentic, being ascribed by some scholars to the Sung period; see Rafe de Crespigny, *Portents of protest in the Later Han dynasty: The memorials of Hsiang K'ai to Emperor Huan* (Canberra, 1976), pp. 70–72 note 52. The contents of that work are utterly different from the citations of the *Ching Fang i-chuan* that appear in books such as the *Han shu* (see note 74 above). For the work of Ching Fang the first, see *Chou-i Ching shih chang-chü* (fragments collected in *Yü-han-shan-fang chi-i-shu*).

The tao *and derivative ideas*

Some of the best-known texts that were compiled during the Warring States period and that invoke concepts formulated in the preceding centuries are concerned with ideas that are generally – and rather loosely – described as Taoist. Books such as the *Chuang-tzu* or the *Tao-te ching* possess a poetic imagery and inherent mystery that have appealed to readers throughout the centuries of Chinese culture, at times enjoying the patronage of an emperor and frequently attracting the attention of scholars.[103]

The basic facts of authorship or compilation of these texts are far from certain; it is not in their nature to propound a systematic or logical explanation of ideas, and the texts have given rise to many interpretations. Nevertheless, a central theme may be discerned in the concept of *tao* as the single order of nature whose mind and intention underlie all aspects of the universe. This concept is sometimes linked with the ideal of quiescence or inaction, no-ado (*wu-wei*). In certain circumstances, man may be capable of recognizing the characteristics of the *tao* or its influence, even though this may not be immediately obvious in material shape. By exercising care to avoid deliberate acts that run counter to *tao*, man may achieve conformity with its pattern and thereby attain a state of calm, well-being, or happiness. The difficulty of doing so lies partly in human weakness. Man is but one of the myriad creatures of nature, but he is bound by a built-in tendency to regard himself as master of the others. Only by escaping from this constraint, by accepting that his comprehension is subjective and delusory, and by rejecting man-made values in favor of those of *tao*, can a man shake himself free of his limitations.

It is evident that these ideas would have little in common with those of the men who were setting out to organize and regulate human communities in material interests. The conflict became all the sharper as the poorly organized and smaller kingdoms gave way to the empires, with their greater and more effective demands for social discipline, obedience to calls for service, and the imposition of institutions. Nevertheless, Taoist ideas still had a part to play in the forms of government that were emerging as a result of the compromise between two opposing ideas. These were the notions of authority, as expressed by Shang Yang, Shen Pu-hai, and Han Fei, and the stress on human values to be found in works such as the

103 For recent studies of these works, see D. C. Lau, *Lao tzu: Tao te ching* (Harmondsworth, 1963); A. C. Graham, *Chuang-tzu: The seven inner chapters and other writings from the book* Chuang-tzu (London, 1981). See also Graham, *The book of Lieh-tzu*.

Hsün-tzu or the *Mencius*.[104] Taoist ideas are noticeable particularly in *wu-wei* and Huang-lao thought.

There was an obvious connection between the idea of *wu-wei* and the practice of imperial sovereignty. Avoidance of deliberate activity or decisions derived partly from disillusion with human values and the individual's judgment; a comparable idea came to be applied to the proper place and powers of the monarch. Ideally the monarch should refrain from taking a personal part in governing or making decisions; rather than make a deliberate attempt to exercise his authority, he should be content to take his ease, with his arms folded in his sleeves, leaving to his subordinates the work of managing the affairs of state. He reigned by virtue of his presence and his unspoken authority, in the same way as the unseen *tao* controlled the workings of the world of nature.

Cynical considerations may have entered into this idea. Obviously it would suit forceful ministers of state or senior officials to promote the view that all powers of decision rested with them rather than with the sovereign. In practice there was considerable variation in the way in which emperors chose to exert their personalities or to retire behind a screen of *wu-wei*, leaving it to their advisors to govern. Examples are also cited of a few highly placed officials, particularly in the early stages of the Han empire, who deliberately espoused the principle of *wu-wei*; by refraining from taking positive action, we are told, they succeeded in administering their areas in such a way that they enjoyed peace and prosperity.[105]

Ts'ao Shen, one of the officials mentioned in this connection, rose to become chancellor of state in 193 B.C.[106] He also figures among a number of those known to have been influenced by a form of Taoist thought called Huang-lao. Until recently, little was known for certain about Huang-lao thought, beyond the short references in the Standard Histories. Possibly the lack of information is due to the failure of this mode of thinking to gain prominence as compared with other forms, for reasons that will be suggested below. Perhaps the most famous adherent of Huang-lao Taoism was the empress dowager Tou, consort of Wen-ti and mother of Ching-ti; she died in 135 B.C.

From some of the newly discovered texts in tomb no. 3, Ma-wang-tui, it

104 For these writings, see Duyvendak, *The Book of Lord Shang*; Watson, *Han Fei Tzu: Basic writings*; Homer H. Dubs, *The works of Hsüntze* (London, 1928); D. C. Lau, *Mencius* (Harmondsworth, 1970).

105 For examples, see *LH* 18 ("Tzu-jan"), pp. 777f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 94f.). For the origin and application of *wu-wei*, see Roger T. Ames, *The art of rulership: A study in ancient Chinese political thought* (Honolulu, 1983), pp. 28f.

106 For Ts'ao Shen, see *HS* 39, pp. 2013f. For his appointment, see Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 183 note 3. For his attention to Huang-lao thought, see *HS* 39, p. 2018.

is possible to ascertain much more than has been known previously about the principles of Huang-lao thought.[107] These writings combine some of the principles ascribed to Lao-tzu with some of the characteristic activities attributed to Huang-ti, the Yellow Emperor. In this context, Huang-ti is seen as a mythical figure who should be distinguished from *huang-ti*, the power of yellow, which held a place in the imperial cults. Nor can the Yellow Emperor be credited, in this context, with the powers of an intermediary who, by his example, could show men such as Wu-ti the path to immortality.[108]

As a figure of mythology, the Yellow Emperor achieved ascendancy over a number of rivals. By means of a successful struggle with Ch'ih-yu, known also as the god of war, he achieved his own fulfillment. He was thereby able, by example and precept, to provide a model for monarchs in their task of governing man. Here the ideal of kingship is somewhat different from that of *wu-wei*. The proper ruler seeks, by definite arrangement, to achieve a compromise between the respect due to the individual and the compulsion that may be a necessary part of the imperial order. Provided that a ruler will regulate his conduct in accordance with the principles of the natural world and with due regard to the superior will of Heaven, he will succeed in his task.

In this way, at the time when the methods of government were still based partly on the experiment of the Ch'in emperors, Huang-lao thought was advocating a mitigation of some of its measures. There would be a less rigorous dependence on authority than that upon which Han Fei and Li Ssu had insisted; instead, there would be a deliberate compromise between the escapism of the *tao* and the controls of the empire. The few texts that may be regarded as deriving from Huang-lao thought do not call on the figure or the teaching of Confucius. The texts show some signs of a rudimentary attempt to formulate categories of metaphysics.

A number of reasons may be suggested for the failure of Huang-lao thought to attain a position of prominence. Following the death of one of its prominent protagonists, the empress dowager Tou, in 135 B.C., the character of Han government changed perceptibly; the more intensive policies that were adopted and put into effect were hardly consonant with the principles of Huang-lao thought.[109] In conceptual terms, the idea of *tao* was soon to be put forward with a new degree of emphasis and with a

107 See Nishikawa Yasuji, "Kanjo ni okeru Kōrō shisō no ichi sokumen," *Tōhōgaku*, 62 (1981), 26–39; Jan Yün-hua, "The silk manuscripts on Taoism," *TP*, 63 (1977), 65–84; Jan Yün-hua, "Tao yüan or Tao: The origin," *Journal of Chinese philosophy*, 7:3 (1980), 195–204; Jan Yün-hua, "Tao, principle and law: the three key concepts in the Yellow emperor Taoism," *Journal of Chinese philosophy*, 7:3 (1980), 205–28; and Loewe, "Manuscripts," pp. 119f. 108 See p. 665 above.
109 For the adoption of modernist policies, see Chapter 2 above, pp. 152f.

somewhat different application. This appears in the *Huai-nan-tzu*'s attempt to provide a more complete explanation of the universe, and it is possible that such writings carried greater conviction and were more comprehensive in their treatment than those which derived from Huang-lao. In addition, it was in the decades immediately following that the cult of Confucius and his precepts received direct encouragement from the government and began to form a conspicuous element in the curriculum for training officials. Along with these developments, Tung Chung-shu was formulating a universal system which comprised an appropriate and essential place for the government of man, together with a direct attention to the ethical lessons of Confucius. Tung's teachings may well have been more sophisticated, complete, and attractive than the texts that expressed Huang-lao thought.

The *Huai-nan-tzu*, which was completed in 139 B.C., is a long text divided into twenty-one major chapters. It includes a great deal of mythology and pays considerable attention to religious devotions, particularly those practiced in central or southern China. To this basis the authors sought to add a systematic explanation of the universe in the light of the overriding principle of *tao*. Deeply conscious of the importance of astronomical observation and theory, they saw *tao* operating in the three connected realms of heaven, earth and man, through the medium of *yin-yang* and the Five Phases. The single principle of the *tao* is also recognizable in the way certain phenomena correspond with one another; like responds to like, as may be seen in variations of temperature or sound. In the same way, pressures exerted in the heavens will attract comparable pressures that may be felt on earth.

Other comparisons or analogies were also drawn. The earth was thought to be informed with patterns, or *li*; these were comparable to life-preserving veins or arteries that could only be ruptured with extreme danger, in the same way that the veins and arteries of the human body are severed only at the risk of life.[110]

In this scheme, the ideal state for man is that of living in harmony with the rhythms and divisions of nature, such as the seasons, and in tranquillity, with no discord present in his own species. So, far from attempting to control or to conquer nature, man must refrain from despoiling the world's resources to such an extent that the natural balance will be lost. The proper organization of man would follow the same

110 For the theory of correspondences, see Charles Le Blanc, "The idea of resonance (*kan-ying*) in the *Huai-nan-tzu*, with a translation and analysis of Chapter 6," Diss. Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1978. For the basic idea of patterns running through the earth, see *HNT* 20, pp. 7a, 15a; for the expression "veins of the earth," see *SC* 88, p. 2570.

fundamental patterns that lie behind the movements of the heavenly bodies and the creatures of the earth. Many of these principles are brought out in the following passage:[111]

The age of perfect purity was marked by a silence and a tranquillity in which all things responded to the natural order. Basic qualities remained unimpaired with no wasteful dispersal of energy; conformity with the order of nature was matched by rightful conduct. Action, decisions, pronouncements conformed with the natural order; in the prevailing state of harmony and concord there was no room for pretence or deceit.

In this state of affairs, man did not need to choose a supposedly favourable occasion for an action nor did he practice divination in order to secure the successful outcome of an event. There was no scheming or prudent calculation of what was to be started or what brought to an end. Man's bodily frame formed an inherent part of heaven and earth; his essence was of the same substance as *yin* and *yang*.

Being one, they were in harmony with the four seasons of the year, being bright, they were lighted by the sun and the moon; and they were paired as male and female to match the creative forces of the world. In this way heaven formed a covering above to whose qualities man could aspire; and earth provided a firmament below for the joy of living. The four seasons followed one another without loss of due order; the winds blew and the rain fell without excess or violence. Sun and moon shed their light in serenity and purity; the five planets kept to their orbits without missing their regular movements. It was a time of favourable omens of many sorts, such as the appearance of the phoenix or the *chi-lin* animal, or the fall of honey-dew; and there was no place for design or deceit in the heart of man.

But there followed an age of decline; when tunnels were drilled in the rocks to seek treasure; gold or jade were cut about and carved, to form the implements of man; clams and oysters were forced apart so as to yield their pearls. Man smelted copper and iron, and the myriad living creatures did not reach their full growth. From the wombs of animals man cut out beings as yet unborn; they put to death young animals; and the *chi-lin* animal who comes at an age of bliss never walked the earth. Man overturned the nests; the eggs were smashed; and the phoenix who foretells a time of happiness never took wing. Man drilled with metal or stone to take fire; he laid a structure of timbers to build his edifices; he burnt down the forests to trap the animals; he drained the lakes to catch the fish.

The passage continues with other examples of the way in which man had come to despoil nature, with the catastrophic consequences that attend an imbalance in *yin* and *yang*. The four seasons of the year do not follow their regular order, and climatic violence follows with destruction and death. These sad results are accompanied by the distress and quarrels of a suffering humanity.

111 *HNT* 8, pp. 1a et seq.; Loewe, *Ideas of life and death*, pp. 44–45.

The rationalist approach

One of the features that distinguishes the intellectual attitudes of the Former and Later Han periods is seen in the emergence of a rationalist approach. This is set forth cogently by Wang Ch'ung (A.D. 27–ca. 100), who is known to have written at least four separate works. Of these only one, luckily the longest, survives. This is the *Lun-heng* (*Disquisitions* or *Discourses weighed in the balance*), and fortunately all but one of its eighty-five sections have been preserved. In writing the book, the author set out to choose a style of language that would be clear, so that his arguments would not be subject to misinterpretation.[112] Expressing as he does views that were somewhat exceptional to the great body of Chinese thought, Wang Ch'ung's main characteristic is his independence of mind and his general refusal to accept the assumptions and dogmas of his contemporaries, without being given good reason to do so.

Wang Ch'ung's style of argument was something new in Chinese literature, and for some time it had hardly any parallels. While the *Lun-heng* is the most complete and certainly the most conspicuous surviving expression of a rationalist's point of view of this time, Wang Ch'ung was not entirely alone in propounding these views. A similar approach may be seen in the fragments of a work entitled the *Hsin-lun* (New discourses), by Huan T'an (ca. 43 B.C.–A.D. 28).[113] It is also possible that some of Wang Ch'ung's principles, including that of an independent search for reality irrespective of the generally accepted assumptions of the day, may have been shared by Yang Hsiung.

In addition to his repeated rejection of the sacred authority ascribed to some traditional texts or teachers, Wang Ch'ung sets out to find a rational explanation of the phenomena observed in the heavens and on earth, and in the history and conduct of man. One particular theory against which he reacts with vigor is that of the warnings given to man from Heaven, as set forth by Tung Chung-shu.[114] One of Wang Ch'ung's contributions to Chinese thought lay in his attempt to form and to apply a systematic methodology. He would try to collect the evidence relevant to the subject under discussion; he would produce a hypothesis to explain its characteristic features; and he would suggest how the validity of that hypothesis could be tested by experiment.

112 For a translation of the *Lun-heng*, see Alfred Forke, *Lun-heng: Wang Ch'ung's essays*. For the possibility that originally the work had included a further fifteen or sixteen sections, lost from a very early time, as suggested by Liu P'an-sui, see Forke, *Lun-heng*, p. 1328. For Wang Ch'ung's written style, see Bernhard Karlgren, "Excursions in Chinese grammar," *BMFEA*, 23 (1951), 107–33.

113 See Timoteus Pokora, *Hsin-lun (New treatise) and other writings by Huan T'an (43 B.C.–28 A.D.)* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1975); and Chapter 15 below, pp. 777f.

114 See pp. 708f. below.

At times he argues from analogy, as may be seen in his discussion of thunder and lightning. He sets out five proofs to show that thunder derives from fire or heat and points out that there is no evidence to support the view that it is an expression of the anger of Heaven. In searching for evidence, he asks what symptoms may be observed in the corpse of a man who has been killed by lightning; by way of experiment or analogy, he suggests a test with fire, water, and an iron-casting furnace.[115]

Wang Ch'ung has often been compared with Lucretius (ca. 100–ca. 55 B.C.), who was also trying by systematic inquiry to free mankind from unjustified and unsupported fears of forces whose nature could not be understood. The subjects treated in the *Lun-heng* range widely; the essays investigate the principles and phenomena of natural science. When they are concerned with religious observances and beliefs, the author demands proof of the existence of unseen powers that may affect human lives. Similarly, in philosophical problems, Wang Ch'ung must first satisfy himself that respected sayings and precepts are correctly attributed to the teachers in question and that they are not later fabrications. Frequently enough he calls upon the evidence of history to illustrate his arguments; he will not accept the tendency to discredit the present in favor of a more just or fortunate past.

To modern eyes, however, there are some flaws in Wang Ch'ung's method of argument. Often this springs *ex silentio*, and he does not seem to allow for the difficulty, or even the impossibility, of assembling all the information that may be relevant to his topic. Equally serious is his habit of assuming the validity of certain principles without demonstrable proof, and of subsequently rejecting a statement, belief, or opinion simply because it runs counter to those principles. Argument in a circle of this type suffers from precisely those faults which Wang Ch'ung was quick to castigate in others.

While accepting as valid the Five Phases' theory of existence and change, Wang Ch'ung is equally insistent on the spontaneous nature of the creative processes. Like Lucretius, he devotes a considerable effort to dispelling the fears of an afterlife.[116] In several chapters he sets out to disprove the possibility that man can survive death in any form, or that the spirits of the dead possess the power to communicate with man or to injure him during his lifetime. In the same way he refuses to believe that those who practice divination, or the shamans, have any power to benefit man. On many

115 *LH* 6 ("Lei-hsü"), pp. 286f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 285f.). See Lucretius, 6:96f.

116 *LH* 20 ("Lun-ssu"), pp. 868–82 (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 191–201); *LH* 21 ("Ssu-wei"), pp. 883–906 (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 202–19); and *LH* 22 ("Ting-kuei"), pp. 930–46 (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 239–49). See Lucretius, Book 3.

occasions the *Lun-heng* refers to Heaven, but it is by no means clear what concept Wang Ch'ung had in mind. Like other writers of this period, he does not set out to define his terms, and very often his ideas must be inferred, in a somewhat negative way, from criticism of his opponents. Thus, from the arguments against Tung Chung-shu's views,[117] it may be known that whatever Heaven may have meant to Wang Ch'ung, it did not include something that had a will or the power to interfere in the affairs of men.

At the time when Wang Ch'ung was writing, considerable attention was being paid to the value of Confucius's teaching and to the texts associated with his authorship.[118] But the traditional adulation of the sage kings and their mentors, or of the golden age of the kings of Chou, failed to impress Wang Ch'ung. He thought it idle to suppose that those days had necessarily been any more glorious or prosperous than those of the last century or so of imperial rule. Similarly, the precepts of the old masters require scrutiny before they can be accepted, as they may include some contradictory statements. The Five Classics, which were playing so important a role in the preparation of candidates for the civil service, and whose texts were the subject of considerable controversy, deserved no special treatment as scriptural authority, any more than the apocryphal sayings ascribed to men such as Confucius which had been compiled in Wang Ch'ung's own time.[119]

Wang Ch'ung's treatment of a subject and his conclusions may be compared with those of other early Chinese writers on two major issues, the creation of matter and the force of destiny. The *Huai-nan-tzu* refers to creation in several ways that are hardly consistent with one another, possibly because that work derives from a number of different hands. As has been observed above, in one passage credit for the reduction of chaos to order is ascribed to the mythical figure Nü Kua.[120] In another passage, Heaven is regarded as the supreme creator, regulating *yin* and *yang*, harmonizing the succession of the four seasons and conferring the gift of life on animals and humans.[121] In yet another passage, the *Huai-nan-tzu* accounts for creation in a much more sophisticated, and at the same time more mystical, way.[122] The author describes the process whereby primeval forces were divided and matter separated; there followed the growth of all parts of nature, with like deriving from like or accommodating to like, and with due attention to the spirits. Finally, the *Huai-nan-tzu* refers on several

117 See pp. 708f. below. 118 See pp. 704f. below.

119 For the classical texts, see Chapter 14 below, pp. 754f. For the apocryphal writings, see Chapter 14, pp. 759f.; and Jack L. Dull, "A historical introduction to the apocryphal (*ch'an-wei*) texts of the Han dynasty," Diss. Univ. of Washington, 1966. 120 See p. 660 above.

121 *HNT* 20, p. 1a (Loewe, *Ideas of life and death*, p. 64).

122 *HNT* 7, p. 1a (Loewe, *Ideas of life and death*, pp. 66–67).

occasions to "the one who creates and transforms" (*tsao-hua-che*).[123] No indication is given of how far this figure was conceived in personal or anthropomorphic terms, apart from a vivid comparison with a potter who works his clay. No hint is given of the relationship that the *tsao-hua-che* had with man.

Wang Ch'ung has little room for mythological accounts of creation or for the part played by a named creator. Throughout a chapter of the *Lun-heng* that is basic to his thought,[124] he insists that Heaven takes no part in the process; to show that Heaven does take a part, it would be necessary to demonstrate that it possesses both the will as well as the physical means with which to do so, and such proof is yet awaited. For Wang Ch'ung there can be no question of determinism; all matter is brought into being without prior intent in the same way as children are produced without specific intent, when man and woman unite their vital essences. This idea is cardinal to Wang Ch'ung's view of the world of nature as existing and operating spontaneously, *tzu-jan*, with no intervention by the superior forces of another world. Consistent with this view, Wang Ch'ung does agree that creation can sometimes arise from the transformation of a living creature of one type into that of another, as is evident to anyone who is familiar with the processes of sericulture.[125]

Wang Ch'ung's natural philosophy pays considerable attention to the concept of *ch'i*. This is the vital energy without which life cannot be sustained; it may be apparent in the force that drives the winds, in the generative potential of human semen and ova, or in the steam into which water has been transformed. *Ch'i* informs all living creatures in different proportions; depending on those proportions, an individual's character and abilities will be shaped, and his life will prosper or diminish. In what appears to be a contradiction, Wang Ch'ung ascribes to Heaven the power of bestowing or distributing *ch'i*, but he does not elaborate on what it is that moves Heaven to do so in different proportions.[126]

A further idea which is mentioned in a number of writings is that of *ming*, or destiny. It will be shown below how this concept was utilized in respect of the legitimate authority that a dynastic house could claim to exercise.[127] It appears in the works of Wang Ch'ung and Wang Fu, with implications for some of the subjects that have already been discussed.

In poetic imagery, the terms *ta ssu-ming* and *shao ssu-ming*, the greater

123 *HNT* 1, p. 12b; *HNT* 7, p. 5a-5b (Loewe, *Ideas of life and death*, p. 68); and *HNT* 9, p. 23a.
124 *LH* 18 ("Tzu-jan"), pp. 775–87 (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 92–102).
125 *LH* 2 ("Wu hsing"), p. 55 (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, p. 326); *LH* 3 ("Ch'i-kuai"), p. 152 (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, p. 322); and *LH* 16 ("Chiang jui"), p. 730 (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, p. 368).
126 *LH* 18 ("Tzu-jan"), pp. 776f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, p. 93).
127 See Chapter 13 below, pp. 733f.

and lesser masters of fate or lords of lives, form the titles of two poems in the *Songs of the south*.[128] These are poems which originated in the southern culture, in perhaps the third century B.C., and the term *ming* can hardly bear the same implication here as it does in the philosophical essays of some four centuries later. To Wang Ch'ung, the destiny to which individuals are subject depends first and foremost on the spontaneous developments of the universe. The extent of the vital energy that forms part of each individual may be said to influence that individual's strength or weakness, his survival or destruction. Destiny is also subject to the accident of encounter; an individual may come into contact with another individual or force whose *ch'i* is superior to his own and capable of affecting his destiny. Wang Ch'ung also seems to have agreed that the destiny of human beings was subject to the behavior of celestial bodies. Although this would appear, at first sight, to be in conflict with his rejection of a principle that cannot be proved, there was no fundamental contradiction; for he regarded as proved the view that the universe is unitary, with the movements of any one part being interlocked with those of the others.

To Wang Ch'ung, destiny was in no sense determined by a purposeful superhuman power, whose decisions could be arbitrary, and creation was not determined by destiny. Divination was not a valid means of ascertaining one's destiny, let alone of evading its consequences. Essentially, destiny worked itself out in an arbitrary way, and it could on no account be subject to change because of an individual's ethical qualities or moral behavior. All persons, good, bad, and indifferent, were subject to a destiny that resulted from a natural catastrophe such as flood or drought, in the same way as a field fire does not choose to destroy those plants that are evil and spare those that are good.

Wang Ch'ung distinguished three types of destiny, i.e., favorable, neutral, or adverse. Wang Fu (ca. 90–165) refers to two of these, favorable and adverse, in his essay on divination. He accepts that destiny is determined irrespective of an individual's conduct, but he expresses some alarm regarding the consequences of such a belief. Those who agreed that it was destiny that determined an individual's fortune could derive considerable comfort from that belief, for no stigma could be attached to a person who suffered bad fortune on the grounds that it was his evil conduct that had led to that result. Wang Fu was afraid that such a doctrine might absolve individuals from responsibility for their actions. As distinct from Wang Ch'ung, Wang Fu believed that some valid mantic processes could enable a person to avoid

128 *Ch'u-tz'u* 2, pp. 12a et seq. (Arthur Waley, *The nine songs*, pp. 37f.; Hawkes, *Songs of the south*, pp. 39f.).

the worst consequences of the destiny that was fixed for him; he was anxious to prevent a trust in such processes leading to the abandonment of moral scruple.[129]

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND THE ORGANIZATION OF MAN

The intellectual background of the Ch'in and Han periods owed its character to many different strands of thought. Contributions came mainly from scholars who were working in isolation, but who sometimes congregated in groups. Even before the imperial age there had been examples of academies in which masters and teachers would meet together and produce a particular interpretation of an early text, but such activities can hardly be said to have produced discrete schools of philosophy.[130] Examples are also known of scholars who were assembled by a patron, and whose deliberations later appeared in the form of a book. It is of their very nature that such collections drew eclectically on different modes of thought, as may be seen in examples such as the *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* and the *Huai-nan-tzu*.

On a few recorded occasions, a philosophical text was written as a direct result of imperial orders or patronage; such was the origin of Lu Chia's *Hsin-yü* (New analects) and the account of the discussions held in 81 B.C. that has survived as the *Yen-t'ieh lun* (Discourses on salt and iron). Of these two examples, one resulted from a determined effort to set out a single explanation of mankind and his needs; the other recounts opposing points of view on man's problems. On other occasions, such as 51 B.C. and A.D. 79, assemblies of learned men were specifically ordered to address themselves to scholastic problems, such as the selection of suitable texts for the canon of the scriptures and the isolation of certain interpretations of those texts as orthodox.[131]

During Later Han, exclusive schools came into being in regard to the interpretation of the classical texts, but it was still too early for the emergence of recognizably distinct schools of philosophy. Certainly there was a tendency for thinkers of like mind to draw together on the basis of a shared viewpoint, and it has been seen that in this way some Han texts developed from a common appreciation of certain values. But one of the difficulties in separating the different strands of thought at this time lies in the use of the same terms, such as *tao*, without clarification or definition; different au-

129 *LH* 2 ("Ming i"), pp. 41f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 136f.); *CFL* 6 ("Pu lieh"), p. 291. For Wang Ch'ung on destiny, see Chapter 15 below pp. 780f.

130 One of the most famous of the academies was that of Chi-hsia. See Hsiao, *A history of Chinese political thought*, p. 5 note 10 et passim; and Chapter 14 below, p. 748.

131 See Tjan Tjoe Som, *Po hu t'ung: The comprehensive discussions in the White Tiger Hall* (Leiden, 1949, 1952); and Chapter 14 below, pp. 763f.

thors use the same terms with different emphasis, or on the assumption of different values.

By contrast with those of a Taoist frame of mind, who concentrated on the order of nature as the center of being, those who traced their principles to the precepts of Confucius and his immediate followers insisted on the need to balance the interests of the individual with the demands of governing humanity as a whole. Here a further contrast should be drawn, which is perhaps more one of degree than of principle. Those of a Confucian frame of mind put man before the institutions of the empire, which they regarded as the instruments evolved for the betterment of the individual. Legalist thinkers, described sometimes as realist, authoritarian, or even totalitarian, believed that it was quite legitimate for the state to assign a higher priority to its own overriding aspirations than to the hopes of the individual.

This difference was by no means necessarily polarized, in view of the Chinese genius for compromise. It has been shown above how imperial government was founded by the leaders of Ch'in on the basis of principles set out by Han Fei and Li Ssu.[132] In practice, these principles were modified under the emperors and statesmen of Han, who realized that the unmitigated imposition of discipline is insufficient and potentially self-defeating. They understood that the successful organization of government depends both on acquiring the active support of those who are governed and on their willing cooperation. It was in this way that ethical values traced to Confucius came to receive a new emphasis.

The Confucian view of man

The sayings attributed to Confucius were formed to apply to the social and political conditions of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. From the modifications and extensions that suited the conditions of the imperial age, a number of principles may be discerned. It was believed that man is basically capable of moral improvement, in such a way that he can achieve a more noble type of existence, establish more friendly and fruitful relations with his fellows, and reach higher standards of cultural living. Such improvement can be nurtured by the rulers if they but trouble themselves to adopt the right priorities, and if they will show by their example a concentration on ethical values.

It is the duty of the individual to place his talents and his efforts at the disposal of his fellow men and to cooperate with them in ordering a communal life. As some measure of authority is essential if a shared and

132 See Chapter 1, pp. 74f.; and Chapter 9 above.

ordered way of life is to be practiced, there is an obligation on the individual to serve as an official of government; he must also be prepared to accede to the demands that officials may impose in the interests of the general welfare. In view of the all too apparent differences in the qualities and abilities of individual men and women, it is only right and expedient to maintain corresponding distinctions in human communities. In such a way, the individual will play his part in serving others as he best can. Hierarchies are an essential part of a well ordered society, and they must be accepted voluntarily.

These principles underlie much of the writing produced by officials during the Han period. A number of the steps which Han governments took to put such principles into practice have been described, somewhat loosely, as the Victory of Confucianism,[133] and they have had a paramount influence on China's subsequent intellectual history. These steps included the selection of classical works for training and the establishment of academicians; this was followed by the foundation and great extension of the Academy.[134] From these institutions and the call for the recruitment of educated men to serve as officials grew the system of examinations that would dominate China's intellectual development for the next two millennia.

The ideas and ideals of Confucian writing, that is, not only the sayings attributed to Confucius, but also precepts of the classical texts such as the *Book of songs* and the *Book of documents* with whose production he was said to have been concerned, thus became matters of supteme importance in Chinese culture. Although no definition of those values and concepts can be found in the Confucian writings, certain key words recur in the statements of politicians and philosophers; and although the meaning of those expressions remained anything but static, they came to serve as symbols of the Confucian view of man and his duties. The expressions include the all-important *jen*, variously rendered as "humanity," "benevolence," or "philanthropy"; *i*, which is the nearest term in Chinese to approximate to the European concept of justice; *hsiao*, the duty owed by children to their parents; and *chung*, the adherence required to a master whose cause follows the right principles.[135]

The Confucian ideals also provide for the appropriate relationships that

133 See, e.g., Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 20f.

134 See Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 17, 19, 23; Chapter 2 above, pp. 153f.; Chapter 8 above, p. 494; and Chapter 14 below, pp. 756f.

135 For statements of the basic Confucian position, see Fung Yu-lan, *A history of Chinese philosophy*, trans. Derk Bodde (London and Princeton, 1952), Vol. I, pp. 43f., 106f.; Arthur Waley, *Three ways of thought in ancient China* (London, 1946), pp. 115–95; de Bary et al., *Sources of Chinese tradition*, Vol. I, pp. 86–121; Chan, *Source book in Chinese philosophy*, pp. 14–114; Ames, *The art of rulership*, pp. 1–6.

should exist among different members of society, such as between a ruler of mankind and his advisors. In the same way, certain idealized qualities or modes of behavior were denoted by epithets that came to be used conventionally, to describe the character or function of certain key figures in the organized society of the Chinese empire. The ideal type of ruler was thus described as *sheng*, rendered as "sage" or "holy"; his qualities included those of men who are anxious to appoint the most suitable advisors to high office, and having done so to harken to their admonitions. The ideal type of minister of state, who complements the sage king, was the man characterized by the quality *hsien*, intelligence combined with integrity. Such men never lacked the courage to warn their sovereigns if they thought that they were being led astray or were taking imprudent decisions.

The importance of li

The concept and practice of *li* was of cardinal importance to the Confucian scheme of ordering mankind. *Li* was a set of guidelines which prescribed conduct that would meet with approval in all ranks of society. Such conduct ensured that full recognition would be given to the duties and the virtues of a properly organized community.

Li applied to human situations of all types, whether at the level of imperial occasions or religious observance. It governed social deportment and the domestic relationships that were suitable among members of a family. It was based on the belief that there is a proper place for men and women of all types and merits. At its best, it could be claimed that *li* formed a suitable framework within which individuals could live happily in their correct stations and in a steady relationship with superiors and inferiors. At its worst, *li* could be blamed for stifling freedom of behavior and spontaneous activities, and for insisting on the observance of regulations that were long outmoded.

Li prescribed the proper conduct at religious services to the powers (*ti*), to Heaven, to the *shen* or the *kuei*; it also dictated how respect should be rendered to ancestors, whether alive or dead. It set down the correct orders of precedence in public life and in the family; it maintained a dignified order of action and the necessary degree of discipline in the palace, at an official's court, or in a domestic residence. *Li* regulated matters of everyday life, imposing time schedules for work in town and country. By laying down prescriptions for ceremonies such as those of divination, *li* could find a place for age-old traditional practices within the framework of a sophisticated society; in doing so, it might well deprive those practices of some of their vitality.

Some saw *li* as a means of tempering excessive emotion in the interests of maintaining social stability; others believed that through the prescriptions of *li,* it would be possible to preserve and propagate the ethical ideals advocated from the time of Confucius. It was a mark of the Confucian attitude to believe that the paragon kings of the golden ages of the past had conformed to the dictates of *li*; Confucian scholars would interpret the motives and decisions of the leaders of old in the light of obedience to this code. By the same token, many incidents of pre-imperial history would be evaluated as examples of conformity with or disregard of *li*; the consequences formed a lesson that could easily be learned.

In some respects, *li* may be regarded as a counterpart or complement to the statutes and ordinances of the empire which were imposed through the authority of officials and enforced by the sanctions of punishments.[136] It was a voluntary regimen that was a mark of a civilized community, and if accepted it led to more highly cultured standards of living. Its prescriptions are formulated in some four surviving documents. These draw on pre-imperial practice and possibly on pre-imperial texts, but they were mostly completed in their present form during the Han period.[137] Anxious as these books are to establish that their prescriptions are supported by the force of tradition, they often ascribe practices of the imperial period to earlier ages, particularly to the time of the kings of Chou. They lay down rigid procedures for most occasions in life in a remarkably detailed form – for example, procedures for choosing a site for burial; the type of dress suitable for those of different stations in life; the correct equipment to be used in transport or in military activity.

According to the historians who were writing on behalf of the Han empire, the importance of *li* was recognized at an early stage. It is recorded that, in disgust at the brash and mannerless behavior of his supporters, the Han founder, Kao-ti (r. 206–195 B.C.), agreed to an attempt to draw up a code of conduct, and was delighted with the enhanced dignity that its observance conferred on his position.[138] It may well be questioned whether this incident is recorded in this manner simply by way of pointing out the contrast between the Han and earlier regimes. Later on, however, there is no doubt that *li* was taken very seriously at the Han court. The *Han shu* includes a treatise on the subject which starts off by pointing out the salutary and civilizing effects that the observance of *li* can bring.[139]

136 See Chapter 9 above, pp. 525f.

137 For the principal codifications (*Chou-li, I-li, Ta-tai li-chi,* and *Li-chi*), see Loewe, *Ideas of life and death*, p. 205, s.v. *Chou-li.*

138 For the work of Shu-sun T'ung in this connection, see *HS* 1B, p. 81 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 146); and *HS* 43, p. 2126.

139 *HS* 22, pp. 1027f. (A. F. P. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han law* [Leiden, 1955], pp. 430f.) For the attention paid to *li* in Later Han, see Chapter 4 above, p. 296.

In discussing the virtues and benefits of *li*, that same chapter of the *Han shu* also treats of a particular type of human activity that should properly be subject to scrupulous care: music. *Li* is seen as the means of regulating conduct; music was thought to possess its own powers and the means of stabilizing human emotions. *Li* and music together are capable of bringing about social harmony and amity. If its influence was exerted in a correct way music could only be beneficial, and for this reason the traditional music of a former golden age had attracted praise. But it was also necessary to beware of music of a very different type which would excite the passions rather than stabilize the emotions. This was denigrated as leading to permissive or ill-disciplined behavior, which had no place in the Confucian ideal society.[140]

The importance of music had been recognized by the designation of one text as the *Yüeh-ching* (Canonical book of music), now long lost. In addition, rhe imperial library collected by Liu Hsiang included six works that concerned music.[141] A Bureau of Music had been established as part of the Han government offices from ca. 114 B.C. Its duties were to collect music of an approved type and ro supervise performances, especially at religious occasions. As the decades passed, the office was said to have been paying undue attention to music of a type that was not approved, and attempts were made to purge such activities. These developments coincided with the tendency to reduce public expenditure, and after a series of preliminary moves, the office was finally abolished in 7 B.C.[142]

Tung Chung-Shu and the warnings of Heaven

The exposition of ethical values and the stress that was being laid on *li* derived in the first instance from the teaching of Confucius and his disciples. This had grown up during the Warring States period, at a time when other intellectual developments of the first order of importance were simultaneously taking place. The needs of the political units that were taking shape were at the same time demanding closer attention to the means and principles of administering a kingdom. By the Ch'in and Han periods, these changes and needs had become far more deeply pronounced; in particular, a major developmenr had taken place in the propagation of the theory of the Five Phases. It was one of the achievements of Former Han to produce a new intellectual framework within which these new ideas

140 *HS* 22, pp. 1028–29. Music considered by traditionalists as being of a debilitating and harmful type was characterized as that of Cheng and Wei, two states of the pre-imperial age; see Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 202f. 141 *HS* 30, p. 1711.

142 See Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 200f.

could be accommodated and reconciled. The ethical ideals of the masters found their place alongside the exercise of imperial rule and the explanation that the universe was controlled by the overall rhythms of the Five Phases. Moreover, new vigor was being infused into the respect due to Confucius as a teacher. In addition, the lessons of past history were being invoked to give credence to the newly emerging view of the universe and man.

The formation of a synthesis that could encompass these different elements is ascribed to Tung Chung-Shu (ca. 179–ca. 104). While this traditional view of Tung's contribution can in general be accepted, it requires some modification. As happens so frequently in the production of a synthetic or eclectic system of thought, a great deal is owed to earlier thinkers, not all of whom can be traced with certainty. In this instance, credit is due to a predecessor of Tung Chung-shu named Lu Chia, who played an important part both in Han foreign relations and in the growth of Han Confucianism, as the new system has come to be known.[143]

Lu Chia had been one of the early followers of Liu Pang and had accompanied his successful progress to found the Han empire. According to the traditional account,[144] he incurred the anger of Kao-ti by his continual praise or citation of the *Book of songs* and the *Book of documents*. When Kao-ti roundly demanded what value such works could be to the material work of winning an empire, Lu Chia warned him that material forces were inadequate to the task of maintaining it in a state of order; he ended by producing a set of essays with which he persuaded China's new ruler of his case. This account of the production of the *Hsin-yü* (New analects) may be fanciful; it may also reflect the realization that there were inherent dangers in simply trying to take the place of Ch'in. That empire had come to a speedy end, and it was to be hoped that a difference could be discerned between an empire of that type and one that would last. It was in this respect that Lu Chia stressed the need to give heed to the traditional lessons and ethics of the two books that he had quoted and to the man who was held to be their compiler, Confucius.

Lu Chia had witnessed the defeat of Ch'in, the years of civil war, and the foundation of Han. Tung Chung-shu lived through a period in which Han governments were deliberately taking the initiative and embarking on a set of intensive policies. Although Tung protested against some of the results of such policies, he did not live to see the reaction which set in during the reigns of Yüan-ti (49–33 B.C.) and Ch'eng-ti (33–7 B.C.).[145] It was not until later that Tung's ideas may be said to have been fully accepted, from

143 See Chapter 6 above, p. 452; and Chapter 13 below, pp. 731f. 144 *HS* 43, p. 2113.

145 For Tung Chung-shu's protests, see *HS* 24A, pp. 1137f. (Swann, *Food and money*, pp. 179f.). For the reactions under Yüan-ti and later, see Chapter 2 above, pp. 198f.

the time of Wang Mang (r. A.D. 9–23) and the early decades of Later Han. His synthesis came into its own at much the same time as the final adoption of Heaven as the object of state worship, and the new attitude toward literature and the classical texts that was partly due to Liu Hsin.[146]

Tung Chung-Shu's views are clearly set forth in three memorials that he addressed to the throne in response to an invitation to do so; this may have been as early as 134 B.C.[147] In these documents there is a new stress on the unitary nature of the worlds of heaven, earth, and man, operating through the medium of the Five Phases. This single system included as an essential element the temporal rule that the emperor exercised on earth to control man.

The emperor was known as the *t'ien-tzu*, or Son of Heaven. This was an expression that the kings of Chou had been proud to claim as being uniquely their own, and it symbolized the relationship now assumed to link the Han emperor and the supreme authority, even though the nature of that authority was not defined.[148] This special relationship provided for Heaven to take deliberate steps to look after the fate of human beings and to express concern over the quality of the emperor's stewardship. If that charge was being conducted inadequately or irresponsibly, Heaven thought it right to issue a warning to the emperor, in the hope that he would so readjust his policies or reform his personal conduct that a state of well-being would be restored on earth.

This theory of Heaven's power to issue warnings to mankind's ruler rested in part on the theory of correspondences, the view that the activities which occur in any one part of the universe will be accompanied by and reflect those which take place elsewhere. This belief had also appeared in writings such as the *Huai-nan-tzu*,[149] and it was now being extended in a way that led to grave implications. From the thesis that a dislocation on earth (or in the heavens) will accompany a corresponding and similar dislocation in the heavens (or on earth), and from the view that Heaven is concerned with the well-being of man, there follows the thesis that the supreme authority of Heaven will take the initiative to correct such a situation. By bringing about a strange phenomenon in the skies or on

146 For the worship of Heaven, see pp. 663f. above. For Liu Hsin, see Chapter 14 below, pp. 761f.

147 *HS* 56, pp. 2495f., 2506f., and 2513f. For the possible dating at 134 B.C., see *Han-chi* 11, p. 1b. *TCTC* 17, pp. 549f., dates them at 140; see Michael Loewe, "Imperial sovereignty: Dong Zhongshu's contribution and his predecessors" (forthcoming). Some reserve is necessary before accepting that all parts of the *Ch'un-ch'iu fan-lu*, a much larger text that is ascribed to Tung Chung-shu, are authentic.

148 An early use of the term *t'ien-tzu* with reference to a Han emperor is seen in the account of the events that led up to the accession of Wen-ti in 180 B.C.; see *SC* 10, p. 414 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, p. 447); and *HS* 4, p. 106 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 225). For Tung Chung-shu's use of the term, see *HS* 56, p. 2521; for the use of the expression by the kings of Chou, see *HS* 56, p. 2521. See Herrlee G. Creel, *The origins of statecraft in China*, Vol. I. *The Western Chou empire* (Chicago and London, 1970), pp. 82, 441, 494–95. 149 See note 110 above.

earth, Heaven can indicate to its son, the emperor, the nature and the extent of his misgovernment. The emperor should be ready to recognize the warning and to take appropriate action. If he does so effectively, he will put an end to the upset or imbalance and repair the lack of harmony.

By relating the rule of the emperor to Heaven, Tung Chung-shu was reestablishing a link that had been claimed to exist for the kings of Chou; it had not been, and could not be, claimed on behalf of the kings who had ruled in the period immediately preceding the unification. Strange or outrageous events, such as eclipses, earthquakes, or the appearance of comets thus constituted a warning to the emperor. It became the duty of officials to report such occurrences to the throne, and the throne was obliged to inquire what the implications might be. Once reported to the throne in this way these events may be termed portents, and it is clear that their occurrence was being manipulated for political purposes. For it has been shown that, although occurrences of this type of natural incident take place at random, or according to rare but regular cycles, the surviving reports of, for example, aberrations in the skies or catastrophes on earth, are made in anything but a regular or complete manner.

It is evident that there was a technique of exploiting these strange events so as to influence or even to bring pressure to bear on the emperor's government. Instead of seeking reasons to explain why Heaven had chosen a particular moment to cause, for example, a flood, it could be suggested that the errors or misjudgments of senior officials had been of such moment, or the behavior of certain persons within the palace had been of such enormity, that Heaven had chosen of its own initiative to deliver a warning. If the stability of the empire was to be restored, it could be urged, such decisions must be reversed or such conduct reformed.[150]

Tung Chung-shu was by no means the only person to express his views on portents and to attempt to interpret their lessons. In a series of chapters that record events of this type,[151] the *Han shu* incorporates the comments expressed by a number of persons whose styles and approaches to these matters are somewhat different. In addition to Tung Chung-shu himself,

150 For the view that the selection of events to be reported in this way was due to the deliberate choice of officials, see Bielenstein, "Portents," pp. 137f.; and a paper presented to a workshop held at the University of California, Berkeley, in June 1983, under the title "Divination and portent interpretation in ancient China." For the view that such a choice was made by the historians who compiled the record, see Wolfram Eberhard, "The political function of astronomy and astronomers in Han China," in *Chinese thought and institutions*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Chicago, 1957), pp. 51, 59–60; and A. F. P. Hulsewé, "Zur Frage nach der Methode der chinesischen Historiographen," *Orientalistische Literatur Zeitung*, 53:1–2 (1958), 12–21. This view was also maintained by Mansvelt Beck in a paper presented to the workshop named above.

151 *HS* 27; this is divided into three major sections, of which two are further subdivided. See also *HS* 26, which includes records of astronomical phenomena.

several officials, including Liu Hsiang, Wang Yin, and Kung Sui, specifically stated that these untoward events were to be interpreted as Heaven's warnings. Liu Hsin even identified some particular shortcomings, such as the failure to offer worship at the tombs of the kings of Chou, or unwillingness to harken to admonitions.[152] Of all those whose comments are recorded, Ching Fang the second did most to interpret portents in universal as well as in particular terms, using a special formula for the purpose. The following incident serves as an example:[153]

In the third year of Chien-p'ing, in the reign of Ai-ti [4 B.C.], there was a tree in Ling-ling which measured 16 feet in girth and 107 feet in length and which had fallen prostrate on the ground. When the local inhabitants cut off its roots, they found that they extended for over nine feet and that they were rotten through and through. But after three months the tree suddenly erected itself in its old position. Ching Fang's *I-chuan* says: "Abandonment of correct standards and practice of immorality; this has as its portent a tree which, though chopped up, will join together of its own accord. The imperial consorts monopolise privilege; a tree that lies aground stands upright, and chopped or rotten timber sprouts new growth; Heaven's ruler suffers the results."

In a number of instances, scholars and commentators of the Han period expressed their view of portents that had been reported for long before the dawn of the imperial era, mainly in documents such as the *Spring and autumn annals*. The *Han shu* carries comments made about these early incidents by Tung Chung-shu, who should also be credited with adding a new dimension to the view of man and his history. In a famous passage, he explicitly draws attention to the value of the lessons of the past as a means of understanding human affairs and assessing contemporary human achievement. He writes as follows, in connection with a fire that broke out in one of the halls erected in memory of Kao-ti, in 135 B.C.:[154]

The method of the *Spring and autumn annals* is to cite events of the past in order to explain those of the future. For this reason, when a phenomenon occurs in the world, look to see what comparable events are recorded in the *Spring and autumn annals*; find out the essential meaning of its subtleties and mysteries in order to ascertain the significance of the event; and comprehend how it is classified in order to see what causes are implied. Changes wrought in heaven and on earth, and events that affect a dynasty will then all become crystal clear, with nothing left in doubt.

152 For examples, see *HS* 27A, p. 1331 (for Tung Chung-shu); *HS* 27B (1), p. 1396 (for Kung Sui); *HS* 27A, pp. 1331, 1335 (for Liu Hsiang); *HS* 27A, p. 1343 (for Liu Hsin); *HS* 27B (2), p. 1417 (for Wang Yin); *HS* 27C (2), pp. 1504f., Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 245f., and Loewe, *Ideas of life and death*, pp. 87–88 (for Tu Ch'in and Ku Yung); *HS* 27C (1), p. 1476 (for Tu Yeh).
153 *HS* 27B (2), pp. 1413f.
154 *HS* 27A, pp. 1331f. (Loewe, *Ideas of life and death*, p. 86).

In this way Tung Chung-shu may be said to have enhanced the value of historical studies in a manner that led eventually to Ssu-ma Kuang's use of history as a mirror in which to reflect and examine the ordered government of the world.

As might be expected, Wang Ch'ung rejected out of hand any theory that rested on an assumption of Heaven's independent initiative and action. To Wang Ch'ung, Heaven cannot possibly have taken part in bringing about calamities, let alone as a means of conveying a warning to mankind. For Heaven possesses neither the will nor the means to do so, and any suggestion that it takes note of human misdemeanors is not compatible with the truth about creation, that it had taken place and was taking place as a spontaneous process.[155]

Attention to incidents that became portents was by no means confined to those of bad augury. The Standard Histories record events of a fortunate nature and the steps whereby they were recognized as such. Perhaps the best example is the series of incidents in which birds had been roosting on some part of the palace buildings, honey dew had fallen, or golden dragons had been sighted at various times during the reign of Hsüan-ti (74–49 B.C.). These reports were duly received with acclamation as a sign of the blessing that Heaven had vouchsafed to the emperor and his dispensation. The events were announced in imperial edicts, and sometimes they were commemorated for all time by the adoption of a reign title.[156] There can, however, be little doubt that these reactions were arbitrary and due to a desire to fasten on particular events for propaganda purposes. For during these very years there also took place events of highly unfortunate augury, such as the comet which appeared in 61 B.C. or the fire that broke out in part of the palace in 50.[157] During that decade, at least, it evidently suited Hsüan-ti's advisers to draw the attention of his subjects to happy rather than to unhappy occurrences.

The call for discipline

Toward the end of Han, social instability and loss of political cohesion gave rise to the need for a reassessment of public life and its institutions. Thinking minds could hardly be satisfied that the ideals on which their

155 *LH* 14 ("Ch'ien-kao"), pp. 634f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 1194f.); and *LH* 18 ("Tzu-jan"), pp. 784f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 100f.).

156 The reign titles Shen-chüeh (divine birds), Wu-feng (Five phoenix), Kan-lu (Honey dew) and Huang-lung (Golden dragon) were adopted for the years 61–49 B.C. (*HS* 8, pp. 259, 264, 268, 273; Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 239, 247, 254, 261). For examples of edicts, see *HS* 8, pp. 258, 263 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 238, 244).

157 *HS* 8, pp. 261, 273 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 241, 261).

training had been based had successfully brought about peace and prosperity for all. Instead of the signs of the blessing of Heaven, they saw around them official oppression and extravagance, political rivalries and dissidence, and economic imbalance. However, although it may have been realized that it was necessary to revert to ethical standards ascribed to the past and to infuse public life with a new respect for moral attitudes, the proposals that were voiced were not immediately directed as an appeal to the moral standards of Confucius. The new conditions of the empire required a new emphasis in identifying the current ills and suggesting means of correction.

The surviving writings of several officials or philosophers at this time call for a reaffirmation of the discipline on which the empire depended for secure and efficient administration. The laws should be enacted effectively, and punishments should be applied as a means of eliminating evil practices, before faith could be restored to ethical values. These forceful pleas for a return to the principles of former Legalist thought were, however, tempered by one difference. The pre-imperial Legalist statesmen who had founded the empire of Ch'in had seen their objective as that of enriching and strengthening the state for its own sake. The new Legalists of the second century A.D. saw the stringent measures they advocated as a means of bringing pressure to bear on criminals or oppressors, in the interest of the greater part of the population.

This difference was partly due to the experience of the intervening years, in which the Confucian ethic had established its own tradition. The values and virtues of Confucius's thought had been taught for decades as part of the curriculum for education. For this reason, the intellectual climate of the last half of the second century A.D. was very different from that of 250 B.C. The four centuries had seen how a stark, realist approach to the government and organization of man had come to grief. But despite the long experience that had followed of associating the imperial order with the traditions of the past, there had likewise set in a period of decadence and corruption; the inculcation of moral ideals had failed to prevent the outbreak of power struggles and separatism.

Three names may be mentioned of those who called forcefully for a return to the rules and discipline of the old Legalist type. Wang Fu (ca. A.D. 90–165) saw clearly that it was not enough to rely on an individual's sense of justice and fair play.[158] He looked to a system of laws and punishments that would be applied impartially, as had been advocated centuries earlier by Shang Yang. Ts'ui Shih[159] (d. A.D. 170) was concerned particularly with the

158 See Balazs, "Political philosophy and social crisis," pp. 198f.; and Chapter 15 below, pp. 789f.

need to reduce crime and official oppression. Possibly his own personal history colored his point of view, for he came from a family that had seen better days. When his father died, he had been obliged to sell what remained of the estate in order to meet the expenses of the funeral that contemporary social practice demanded. Ts'ui Shih felt that there was an intolerable and unjustifiable disparity between public demands of that type and the practice of a wise economy, and he protested against the hollow nature of any claim that the imperial dispensation assured prosperity and well-being.

The third critic to be mentioned in this connection, Chung-ch'ang T'ung (ca. 180–220), was perhaps more radical than his contemporaries.[160] He had been born somewhat later than Wang Fu and Ts'ui Shih, and had personally witnessed the effects of the Yellow Turbans revolt. Chung-ch'ang T'ung realized only too clearly that new times required new measures, and strong ones at that, if a sense of order was to be restored to human relations and public life. He felt that it was not sufficient to invoke the moralist scruples of the past in order to rectify the faults of the present. Innovations were needed to restore a sense of discipline, and opportunities for the tranquil life of the Chinese countryside.

IMMORTALITY AND SERVICES TO THE DEAD

It will be apparent by now that the major elements of Ch'in and Han thinking were this-worldly. Writers were concerned with the system whereby the universe and its operation could be understood, or with the relation of man to his surroundings; or they were anxious to explore the place held by moral scruple, conventional behavior, and legal sanction in the regulation of human conduct. But they did not write about death.

Mythology, however, shows that considerable attention was directed to the destiny of the dead, and the great variety of funerary practice that arose in different parts of China illustrates the care that was taken to ensure the happiness of the deceased. It may even be suggested that for many, religious practices of this type and their underlying beliefs had a greater impact on hearts and minds than the solemn observances of the state cults to which emperors and officials attached such importance.

The services rendered to the dead became inseparable from two important aspects of Chinese culture, that is the prescriptions of *li* and the growth of social cohesion. One of the objectives of *li* was to restrain the

159 See Balazs, "Political philosophy and social crisis," pp. 205f.; Patricia Ebrey, "Estate and family management in the Later Han as seen in the *Monthly instructions for the four classes of people*," *JESHO*, 17 (1974), 173–205; Chapter 4 above, pp. 311f.; and Chapter 15 below, pp. 788f.
160 See Balazs, "Political philosophy and social crisis," pp. 213f.

passions and prevent an excessive show of emotion; so the codes of behavior took care to regulate the manner in which grief should be expressed, together with many details of funerary practice, which varied according to the status of those concerned. In this way, the system of *li* took due note of the natural emotions to which man and woman are subject; and it also effectively incorporated them within the hierarchical forms of society that were so dear to the heart of a Confucian.

The practices were equally important in terms of social structure, although this development was not so apparent in Han times as it became later. Being essentially an affair of the clan and the family, the rites of mourning necessarily provided an occasion when the identity of those groups could be tested and reaffirmed. In time a measure of stylization entered into the conduct of these rites; care was taken to ensure that the correct degree of respect was rendered according to seniority, and members of the clan became entitled to take a greater or lesser part in the procedures according to their degree of affinity to the deceased person. Such distinctions served both to enhance the identity and dignity of the clan and to stress its structure.[161]

Some of the steps taken to provide for the future happiness of the dead person will be described below. A prime example of a burial for which no expense or care was spared has already been noted in the case of the mausoleum constructed for the First Ch'in emperor. Although that example is exceptional, many other burial sites show that great material wealth was often spent in the interests of providing a tomb commensurate with the style of living which the dead had enjoyed on earth. There is also reason to show that the great expenditure involved sometimes provoked criticism or prompted an example of economy by way of protest.

Such criticism is voiced most vociferously in chapters of the *Discourses on salt and iron* and the *Ch'ien-fu lun*, and may thus be taken to apply to the first century B.C. and the second century A.D., respectively. Sometimes the criticism took the form of a protest against the insincerity of the times. For there could be a great difference between the somewhat scurvy treatment of a parent during his or her lifetime, despite the demands of the Confucian ideal of filial piety (*hsiao*), and the great show of wealth lavished at his or her funeral, with the hope of impressing contemporary society.[162]

161 For the much later developments whereby mourning groups and their composition became a yardstick of social status and family relationship, see Maurice Freedman, *Lineage organization in southeastern China* (London, 1958).

162 For the tomb of the First Ch'in emperor, see Chapter 1 above, pp. 64, 82f. For criticism of extravagance, see *YTL* 6 ("San pu tsu"), p. 206 (Loewe, *Faith, myth and reason*, p. 126); *CFL* 3 ("Fou-ch'ih), p. 134. For the burial styles of Wen-ti and Ming-ti, see *HS* 6, pp. 134–35 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. I, p. 272); *HS* 36, p. 1951; *HHS* 2, p. 123; and *CFL* 3 ("Fou-ch'ih"), p. 130.

Neither the system of the sixty-four hexagrams, that of the Five Phases, nor the *Huai-nan-tzu*'s view of nature offer any hope for attaining life in another world after death; nor do they describe the means whereby services may be rendered to ensure the well-being of a deceased person. In the same way, the synthesis achieved by Tung Chung-shu leaves these questions out of consideration. When Wang Ch'ung sets out to show that there is not the remotest possibility of survival after death, he does not attack the studied attempts of a named writer to prove that life exists beyond the grave; he is questioning the validity of generally accepted but undocumented beliefs.[163]

In the absence of explicit statements regarding the nature of the soul and the different types of deathlessness or immortality that might be attained, we must rely on incomplete references in a variety of sources. Fortunately, these have been supplemented and in many cases corroborated in recent years by the rich store of material evidence that has come to light. Such evidence derives from burial practices, whose motives may sometimes be inferred; and the tombs include a considerable array of iconographic and symbolic devices. As a result of recent research, it has become possible to relate such evidence to the literary references to immortality and funerary practice, and our understanding of these matters is now far more certain and extensive than it has been hitherto.

The following pages concern the beliefs and practices that grew up in China before the effect of Buddhism had been felt. Owing to the variety of the evidence and its distribution in time, complete consistency can hardly be expected, particularly in view of the Chinese attitude to the whole question. For while it may be expected that in Western cultures a belief in one type of immortality excludes devotion to others, it is quite likely that the Chinese of the Ch'in and Han periods were ready to take precautions for the dead and to render services to satisfy a number of considerations which may in fact have been contradictory.

Kuei, p'o, *and* hun

Three terms are used to denote the nonmaterial elements of human beings: ***kuei***, ***p'o*** and ***hun***. The ***kuei*** are often linked with the ***shen***, or "holy spirits". They were objects whose powers could be dangerous and were therefore to be feared; they deserved worship and appeasement. Those ***kuei***, or "demons," which derived from human beings who had suffered harm at the hands of another human being, were thought to be capable of making a return to earth in order to requite such ills, and they would do so by

163 For Wang Ch'ung's views on death, see note 116 above.

themselves inflicting damage. The earliest reference to *kuei* of this type, the hungry ghost (*e-kuei*), is to be found in the mantic documents from Shui-hu-ti, which date from just before the founding of the Ch'in empire. It was also thought that *kuei* were capable of assuming the bodily guise of various types of creatures, in which they could return to earth to seek their own ends.[164]

According to a more complex belief system, human beings were thought to include a bodily element and two nonmaterial elements. One of these, termed *p'o*, was the force that kept the body active and capable of exerting its limbs and organs; the other element, *hun*, was the instrument of experiencing and expressing intellectual, emotional, or spiritual activities. Usually, the three elements of body, *p'o*, and *hun* separate at death; in exceptional circumstances, the *p'o* and the *hun* remain together, retaining the power of staging a return to earth if it is necessary to avenge ills suffered during life. When, as is usual, they separate, the *hun* will, if it is fortunate and properly assisted, find its way to a blissful realm of paradise, which is conceived in various forms. Provided that certain precautions are taken, the *p'o* remains contentedly with the body, but beliefs here seem to have differed somewhat. Some believed that such precautions could be valid only for a limited period. There was also the possibility that one element of a human being, if unfortunate, would be relegated to the gloomy realm of the Yellow Springs (Huang-ch'üan).[165]

Motives for funerary practices and the destination of the dead

Archeology shows that considerable attention was paid by the Chinese of this period to funerary practice. The motives for doing so were varied, and it was perfectly possible for several types of observance to be followed simultaneously without any feeling of inconsistency. Some advocated ingestion of the "drug that confers deathlessness" (*pu-ssu chih yao*) and sought the means of procuring this elixir.[166] Others tried means of restoring life to a dead person, in the hope of prolonging the period of existence on earth. Yet others attempted to preserve the body in a state of incorruption for as long as possible, so that the *p'o* could continue to inhabit it without discomfort.

Attention to the needs of the *p'o* accounts for the large number of richly decorated and furnished tombs, in which it could live with the equipment

164 For the hungry ghosts, see note 44 above. For Wang Ch'ung's views on this subject, see *LH* 20 ("Lun ssu"), pp. 871f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 192f.).

165 For further details, see Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, pp. 9f.

166 For these and other precautions, see Yü Ying-shih, "Life and immortality in the mind of Han China," *HJAS*, 25 (1964–65), 80–122.

needed and with the necessary protective devices against danger. For the *hun*, it was possible to provide symbolic means and talismans that would convey it safely on its journey to paradise. In addition, there was the custom of including in the funerary furnishings a talisman of a particular type, which drew directly on the theory of the Five Phases; by such means it was hoped that the soul of the dead person would be safely ensconced in the most favorable context of the cosmos that could be devised.

The Yellow Springs was not a happy destination and not one to which the souls of the departed should be deliberately wafted. It seems to have been conceived as the site of a corporate existence, over which the Earth Queen presided in a somewhat grim manner. But there were other places to which the soul could and should be directed. During the Ch'in period, and perhaps the first century of Han, attention was focused on a Paradise of the East. The way lay through certain islands lying east of China which were thought to possess magical and spiritual properties; these were known as the home of certain creatures noted for their purity. By passage through these islands, and particularly the one named P'eng-lai, it would be possible to procure the elixir; once this had been obtained, it would be possible to ascend to a higher realm.

In such an existence, the human being could perhaps cast off some of his or her mortal coils and share a home with a number of beings that outlast human life. These included *ti* (god on high) and the sun and the moon, and access to this sphere was no mean achievement. It involved the ascent of various stairways that are mentioned in mythology, and it was necessary to pass the scrutiny of fierce guardians, man and beast, before admission could be gained; entry by those who were not authorized was sternly prevented.[167]

By at least Later Han, there had developed the notion of a realm inhabited by immortal beings (*hsien*) who possessed certain remarkable characteristics. In addition to their magical powers, their way of life was markedly different from that of the denizens of this world, as they were free from the pain and suffering that attends mortal beings. They are depicted as flying at will through space; for sustenance, they lived off jujubes and distilled jade; and they were able to pluck the Herb of Life. Inscriptions on bronze mirrors describe these habits, and sometimes the immortal beings are themselves depicted, engaged in habits such as that of playing the game of *liu-po*. Sometimes the immortals are fashioned as hybrid creatures; and occasionally they appear in a tomb's mural paintings.[168]

From at least the first century A.D., the idea of a Paradise of the West

167 Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, pp. 48–49.
168 Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, pp. 198–200 (C 4102, C 4311) and Plate XXVIII.

was being cultivated. The idea was in no sense new; its features appear in mythological writings of the pre-imperial age. But although there is a very early occurrence of these features in iconography that may date from the middle of the first century B.C., it was not until the end of the first century A.D. that the idea appears regularly in Chinese works of art.[169] Its presence in funerary furnishings at that time need in no way imply that other ideas of immortality had been abandoned; it is only too likely that they continued to be entertained, with some enthusiasm, alongside the newly aroused beliefs.

The Paradise of the West was placed in the never-never land where the sun sets, about which little was known for certain. Travelers had reported on the topography and the strange names of places there, and there were tales of Mount K'un-lun, surrounded by the "weak water."[170] It was also said that this was the closely guarded home of the Queen Mother of the West (Hsi wang mu), and it was under her aegis that the Western Paradise was conceived to exist. The queen mother is identified by a number of attributes and the presence of special attendants. She was thought to possess the power of controlling the cosmos as well as that of conferring deathlessness or immortality. A number of versions of a myth concern the meetings that the queen held with earthly sovereigns in search of the elixir, and finally with her partner, the King Father of the East.[171]

The care taken for the dead

Literary and archeological sources testify to the great variety of practices that were observed, whether to conform with myth, to satisfy a religious urge, or to demonstrate the strength of intellectual ideas. Some rites were directed to physical objectives; some may be regarded as exercises in sympathetic magic; and some of the ceremonies practiced at this time were maintained in recognizably the same form for some centuries.

Certain measures were sometimes taken immediately when it seemed that death had taken place, in the hope that it was not yet final. The *Songs of the south* include two long poems of invocation designed to recall the *hun* of the deceased person to earth, so that life could be prolonged for another span. The two poems, which date from probably the middle and the end of the third century B.C., are clothed in a rich imagery that draws on the mythology of central China. The hope of restraining the soul from leaving the body, and the intention of preventing the fact of death from being

169 Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, pp. 103, 140 note 95.
170 *HS* 96A, p. 3888 (A. F. P. Hulsewé, *China in Central Asia: The early stage 125 B.C.–A.D. 23, with an introduction by M. A. N. Loewe* [Leiden, 1979], p. 114). For the circumstances of the journeys from which these reports originated, see Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 40f.; and Chapter 6 above, p. 407.
171 For the importance of partnership, see pp. 659f. above.

final, is also seen in the domestic custom of mounting to the roof of a deceased person's home and uttering incantations for this purpose.[172]

The Standard Histories record two cases in which famous persons tried to take measures that would enable them to prolong life and avoid death forever. These were the First Ch'in emperor and Han Wu-ti, whose efforts were directed to securing the elixir of life from the Islands of the East. It has also been noted that Wu-ti attempted to secure that blessing through the intermediary Huang-ti, the Yellow Emperor.[173] In none of these instances were the emperors satisfied that all the measures had been performed satisfactorily.

As distinct from such practices, most of the evidence concerns attempts to achieve a completely different objective. Instead of hoping to lure the soul to stay on earth or to return there, as was the objective of shamanist practice and invocations, the relicts of a deceased person had accepted that death had occurred and were anxious to provide an escort for the soul into the next world; or they wished to provide for the comfort of the element that remained behind but could not inhabit a living body.

One of the most famous of all talismans designed for this end is the painting scrupulously laid on top of a coffin that was buried in tomb no. 1, Ma-wang-tui (central China), in about 168 B.C.[174] Although several other examples of such paintings are known, this one is by far the best preserved. Its rich details derive from the mythology of central China and point the way to the acquisition of the elixir of life by way of P'eng-lai, and the subsequent ascent of the *hun* to paradise.

However, those responsible for the interment of the countess of Tai, at tomb no. 1, Ma-wang-tui, were in no way content to restrict their measures to this single talisman or objective. The tomb was furnished with abundant materials that were probably designed for the comfort of the *p'o* and for its maintenance in the style of life to which it had been accustomed on earth. Such furnishings were regularly included in Ch'in and Han tombs, and their extent and variety depended partly on the wealth of the family and its desire to make a fine display with which the local community would be suitably impressed. Many tombs included valuables in the form of jades, bronzes, lacquerware, or large collections of coins. This habit had prompted some protest from those who believed that material expenses should be directed to the needs of the living rather than the dead; it had

172 *Ch'u-tz'u* 9 ("Chao hun") (Hawkes, *Songs of the south*, pp. 101f.); *Ch'u-tz'u* 10 ("Ta-chao") (Hawkes, *Songs of the south*, pp. 109f.).

173 *SC* 28, pp. 1369–70, 1385 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. III, pp. 436f., 465f.); p. 665 above; and Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, p. 37.

174 The best reproduction of this painting will be found in Wen-wu ch'u-pan-she, *Hsi-Han po-hua* (Peking, 1972); see also Hu-nan sheng po-wu-kuan and Chung-kuo k'o-hsüeh-yüan. K'ao-ku yen-chiu-so, *Ch'ang-sha Ma-wang-tui i hao Han mu* (Peking, 1973), Vol. I, p. 40 fig. 38, Vol. II, Plates 71–77; and Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, pp. 17f.

also drawn the attention of robbers to the opportunities for swift gain that the tomb of a prominent person might offer.

Tombs were also furnished with simulacra of the colleagues, attendants, and servants whose company the deceased person had been used to sharing. There are paintings of the officials with whom he served; very often a tomb includes figurines of entertainers, such as musicians or jugglers, in some cases together with replicas of their instruments. The material needs that the *p'o* might feel would be satisfied by the supplies of food, drink, and clothing that were buried, or even the bales of silk with which a wardrobe could be filled. As no senior official would have been expected to live without a dignified and luxurious means of transport, the dead were often accompanied by model horses and carriages; or these would be depicted in stone relief, to show how well he had lived in a previous existence.

Other themes of the reliefs and murals that adorn Han tombs include scenes of a hunt or a banquet. In addition, prominent persons would be buried with the material symbols of the status that they had attained on earth, such as the seals to which their official posts entitled them, or the text of an imperial edict conferring a privilege. Possibly for the same reason, copies of books were sometimes included to demonstrate the professional occupation of a scholar or an expert in the law. But there may well have been other reasons for burying these valuable texts. The habit of including an inventory of the funerary goods that were buried derived from motives that have yet to be fully explained.[175]

The contents of tomb no. 1, Ma-wang-tui, thus show the attempts made to escort the *hun* to paradise and to provide for the well-being of the *p'o*. In addition, this valuable site included some of the best evidence available for a practice of a very different type. This was the endeavor to preserve the corpse from decomposition, successfully achieved at this tomb for over two thousand years. Burial within a set of multiple coffins and insulation against the elements had done their work.

At least one other example is known where a body was preserved equally successfully.[176] However, attempts to do so by other methods were not so effective. Elaborate prescriptions were included in the codes of *li* regarding the burial of members of the imperial family or others in suits made of

175 For a study of the goods that were buried, see Hayashi Minao, *Kandai no bunbutsu* (Kyoto, 1976). For the subjects of iconography, see Finsterbusch, *Verzeichnis and Motivindex der Han-Darstellungen*. For a selection of low-relief sculpture from East China, see, Shan-tung sheng po-wu-kuan and Shan-tung sheng wen-wu k'ao-ku yen-chih-so, ed., *Shan-tung Han hua-hsiang-shih hsüan chi*, (Chinan, 1982).

176 For a second example, dated 167 B.C., see Chi-nan-ch'eng Feng-huang-shan i-liu-pa hao Han mu fa-chüeh cheng-li tsu, "Hu-pei Chiang-ling Feng-huang-shan i-liu-pa hao Han mu fa-chüeh chien-pao," *WW*, 1975.9, 1–7. For attempts to preserve a corpse from decomposition, see *HHS* 10B, p. 442 note 5.

jade. Jade was thought to possess magical and eternal properties, and by enveloping a corpse within a carefully measured suit, it was hoped that it would be preserved for all time. Surviving traces of such suits have been found at a number of sites, notably at Man-ch'eng (Hopei). Here they had been made for the king and queen of Chung-shan, who died, respectively, in 114 and in a year before 104. The suits failed lamentably to achieve their objective, but it has been possible to reconstruct them in the form in which they had originally been made.[177]

A number of types of prophylactic figures and objects were sometimes included in burials. In tombs excavated in the central and southern parts of the Han empire, there have been found a number of examples of grotesque, goggle-eyed monsters, surmounted by prominent antlers and with elongated tongues that may extend as far as the waist.[178] Some of these figures grasp snakes in their hands or consume them, and this motif appears elsewhere in iconography.[179] These figures are explained as being protectors whose purpose lay in preventing evil influences from entering the tomb and consuming the corpse. Other symbols are used in a positive way as a means of bringing good fortune, such as the goat or sheep's head that recurs in a number of tombs.[180]

More specifically, some of these symbolic devices were intended to bring felicity to the deceased person by surrounding him or her with emblems of the ceaseless forces that keep the cosmos in operation. In its simplest forms, iconography of this type is exemplified by the twin figures of Fu Hsi and Nü Kua, by whose partnership the universe was kept in being. The two figures are often shown with their own attributes of the sun, the bird, or a pair of compasses for Fu Hsi, and the moon, the hare (or, toad), or set square for Nü Kua.[181] A more complex set of symbols designed for the same purpose was formed by the four animals that acted as emblems for four of the Five Phases, the green dragon, scarlet bird, white tiger, and snake with tortoise. Each would be placed at the appropriate corner of the tomb; that is, east, south,

177 For a description of the two suits that have been reconstructed from the fragments found at Man-ch'eng, see Chung-kuo k'o-hsüeh yüan. K'ao-ku yen-chiu-so, Man-ch'eng fa-chüeh-tui, "Man-ch'eng Han mu fa-chüeh chi-yao," *KK*, 1972.1, 14–15; and Chung-kuo she-hui k'o-hsüeh-yüan K'ao-ku yen-chiu-so and Ho-pei sheng wen-wu kuan-li-ch'u, *Man-ch'eng Han mu fa-chüeh pao-kao* (Peking, 1980), Vol. I, pp. 344–57, Vol. II, Plates CCXXV–CCXLIII. For prescriptions for the makeup of the suits in accordance with social status, see *HHS* (tr.) 6, pp. 3141, 3152.

178 Salmony, *Antler and tongue*; and note 13 above.

179 See Sun Tso-yün, "Ma-wang-tui i hao Han mu ch'i kuan hua k'ao-shih," *KK*, 1973.4, 247 fig. 1, 249 fig. 2, and Plates IV-V; and Hu-nan sheng po-wu-kuan and Chung-kuo k'o-hsüeh-yüan K'ao-ku yen-chiu-so, *Ch'ang-sha Ma-wang-tui i hao Han mu*, Vol. I, figs. 17–21.

180 For example, see *Wen-wu ching-hua*, 3 (1964), 1, for the figure of a goat's head on the wall of a Former Han tomb at Lo-yang.

181 For figures of Fu Hsi and Nü Kua, see Cheng Te-k'un, "*Yin-yang wu-hsing* and Han art," *HJAS*, 20 (1957), 182; entries in Finsterbusch, *Verzeichnis and Motivindex der Han-Darstellungen*; and Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, p. 41, fig. 9.

west, and north, respectively, thus ensuring that the corpse in the center was surrounded by appropriate symbols of the cosmic process.

But perhaps the most striking, beautiful, and complete means of conveying this symbolism was in the form of a particular type of bronze mirror that was buried in the tomb. These are the mirrors which bear a characteristic set of linear marks, known as TLV, together with emblems of the twelve divisions of the universe.[182] These twelve emblems are coordinated with the four animal symbols just described. They are set in a square around the center of the mirror, which itself forms a symbolic representation of the fifth of the Five Phases in the form of a mound that stands for earth. This scheme thus neatly combines two explanations of the universe, the one by division into twelve parts, the other by recognition of the five operative factors of the Five Phases. The device symbolizes the perfect reconciliation of the two schemes, with the intention that the deceased person is thereby placed in the most perfect or felicitous combination of cosmic conditions.

In addition to forming a talisman of this type, the TLV mirrors carry a whole host of symbols that refer to the future of human beings after death. These are the indications of the journey that the soul will undertake, by way of the clouds, to reach its destination of paradise; there are also small figures of the elf-like or hybrid immortal beings that will be encountered there. On some of the most perfect examples of these mirrors, inscriptions state the purpose of the emblems explicitly and express the hope that they will preserve the deceased person from danger. Some inscriptions describe the habits of the immortal denizens of the next world.

In this way, the TLV mirrors acted as a most powerful material symbol. They linked the cosmic systems of the twelve and the five, which make no provision for the destiny of man after death, with a direct means of access to the realm of immortality. A belief in an afterlife was in this way consistent with a theory of being. It is also possible that thanks to their shape and construction, the TLV mirrors evoked an instrument (the *shih*) that was used in daily life to ascertain one's position in the rhythm of the universe.[183] By its combination of emblems, the mirror acted as a sign that the most favorable cosmic situation had been assured for the deceased person.

Some of the most beautiful TLV mirrors, and those whose iconography is expressed most correctly, were fashioned during the short dynasty of Wang Mang (A.D. 9–23). In the following decades, the attention of Chinese

182 For a full description of these mirrors, see Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, pp. 60–85; particularly fine examples are illustrated in Plates X, XII–XIV.

183 See p. 678 and note 70 above.

artists began to move toward the Paradise of the West. Symbols of a different sort are therefore to be seen on the low reliefs of tombs or in a few bronze mirrors, which were intended to escort the soul on a safe journey to the paradise over which the Queen Mother of the West presided. Although it is not possible to assign dates to the greater part of the material evidence, there fortunately survive sufficient indications, in the form of tombs whose occupants can be named or whose dates can be determined, to permit a general conclusion that is supported by consideration of the stylistic evidence. A chronological sequence may thus be established for the different ways in which Chinese artists were directing the souls of the dead to paradise.

During Ch'in and perhaps the first century of Han, attention was fastened on the Paradise of the East. By the time of Wang Mang, it was evidently of greater importance to provide for cosmic considerations in the form of the appropriate talismans. Finally, from perhaps A.D. 100 onward, the emphasis shifted to representations of the Queen Mother of the West and her paradise. The queen is recognizable easily enough in stone reliefs, thanks to the characteristic headgear or crown with which she is always adorned. Usually she is accompanied by a particular set of acolytes, which include a hare, a toad, a nine-tailed fox, and a three-legged bird (sometimes three birds). There are also some instances in which the queen is portrayed enthroned at the summit of a pillar that may have been acting as an *axis mundi* or cosmic tree; and in a few choice examples, the queen is shown in partnership with the King Father of the East.[184]

184 Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, pp. 86f. For the attributes of the queen, see figs. 15, 18, 19. For representations of the queen together with her partner, see Plates XXII–XXIII; for the two partners enthroned at the summit of two pillars, see fig. 21.

CHAPTER 13

THE CONCEPT OF SOVEREIGNTY

There are a number of references in previous chapters to events and decisions that bore significantly on the development of China's political ideal: a single empire governed centrally by a duly acknowledged emperor whose legitimacy could not be challenged by a rival regime. To achieve this ideal and to maintain it in practice, the governments of China have nearly always found it necessary to call on the support of religious and intellectual sanction, as may be seen to some extent even in the case of the practical statesmen of Ch'in, at the outset of the imperial period.

Such a need stands revealed, for example, in the deliberate search for a suitable title, and the adoption of *huang-ti* (emperor); and in the successive adoption of water, earth, and fire as the patron elements of a dynasty.[1] The principle is likewise illustrated in the invocation of extraordinary events of nature as omens which displayed the blessings that a contemporary regime enjoyed – or, alternatively, as a means of conveying Heaven's warning to rulers to mend their ways.[2] It has also been shown how attempts were made to explain dynastic change or continuity as matters of necessity, required by the demands of a superior cosmic rhythm.[3] In this chapter an attempt will be made to elaborate some of the ideas that were involved and place them in their intellectual context.

CHANGING ATTITUDES: 221 B.C. TO A.D. 220

One of the principal legacies that the Han dynasty bequeathed to its successors was the demonstration that imperial sovereignty was a respectable means of government which statesmen could serve with loyalty and with due deference to the ethical ideals on which they had been nurtured. A number of different principles, some of which were contradictory, were

1 See above Chapter 1, pp. 77, 96; Chapter 2, p. 172; Chapter 3, p. 230; Chapter 5, pp. 336, 360.
2 See Hans Bielenstein, "An interpretation of the portents of the Ts'ien-Han-shu," *BMFEA*, 22 (1950), 127–43; Chapter 5 above, p. 359; Chapter 12, pp. 708f.
3 See Hans Bielenstein, *The restoration of the Han dynasty*, Vol. II, *BMFEA*, 31 (1959), 232f.

involved in the process whereby the idea came to be accepted. A sharp contrast may be drawn between the complacent claims put forward in 221 B.C. and the affirmation of a creed that was necessary in A.D. 220.

At the outset, it was sufficient to assert on specially cut inscriptions that the newly founded empire had been established thanks to the conquest of rivals, the seizure of territories, and the imposition of an administration from the center. But in the documents that accompanied the accession of Ts'ao P'i as Wei Wen-ti in A.D. 220, and in the course of the solemn religious ceremonies of the occasion, it was necessary to demonstrate that his succession followed the will of superhuman powers which possessed sufficient authority to sanction the abdication of the last of the Han emperors and thus pave the way for the rise of the house of Wei.[4]

The establishment of the Ch'in empire as the sole effective political authority that could expect to command obedience was an innovation in political practice. Certainly the idea of unity had been voiced previously in theoretical terms, especially by some of the followers of Confucius's ethical principles.[5] When this idea had been voiced, however, it was almost in the nature of a dream, or even as a reaction against contemporary conditions. These were marked by a large number of coexistent kingdoms or units, frequently at war with one another, and by the formation of leagues and counteralliances. It was a time when, as we are told, statesmen and generals were rarely inhibited from transferring their loyalties from one party to another or from advising the adoption of tricks and expedients in order to promote the cause of one kingdom or the destruction of another.[6] In addition, attempts to impose an overlordship aimed at unity by means of a *pa*, hegemon, had received a mixed reception. While these attempts were defended by some on the grounds that they would provide an effective protection for the kings of Chou, more usually they were deplored as being an illegitimate means of wresting sovereign authority from the position where it rightfully belonged.

In such circumstances, the prevailing idea of unity was seen as possessing a moral value, however impractical it might be in political terms. This notion centered on the special position of leadership that had for centuries

4 For the inscriptions out shortly after 221 B.C., see *Shih-chi* 6, pp. 242f. (Édouard Chavannes, *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-Ma Ts'ien* [Paris, 1895–1905; rpt. Paris, 1969], Vol. II, pp. 140f.); Chapter 1 above, pp. 66f. For the documents of A.D. 220, see *San-kuo chih* (Wei 2), pp. 62f. (especially note 2); and Carl Leban, "Managing heaven's mandate: Coded communication in the accession of Ts'ao P'ei, A.D. 220," in *Ancient China: Studies in early civilization*, ed. David T. Roy and Tsuen-hsuin Tsien (Hong Kong, 1978), pp. 315–42.

5 E.g., *Meng-tzu*, 'Liang Hui wang 1," section 6 (James Legge, *The Chinese classics*, Vol. II. *The works of Mencius* [Oxford, 1893], p. 136). See also the opinion expressed in an eclectic work of the third century B.C., *Lü shih ch'un-ch'iu*, 20, pp. 1a et seq.

6 For such incidents, whether real or fictional, see works such as the *Tso-chuan* or *Chan-kuo ts'e*, passim.

been ascribed to the kings of Chou, thanks to their special relationship with Heaven and their claim that their royal position derived from Heaven's gift or mandate.

But whatever lip service or respect was given to that claim, the establishment of the kingdoms of the Warring States, the direction of their policies, and the growth of their ambitions bore little or no reference to the power that the king of Chou might exercise. There were few signs that he could affect the conduct of his own government or influence the decisions of the more powerful leaders who stood at the head of their own states in the more remote regions. Several centuries had elapsed since the time when, as it may have been believed, the kings of Chou had exercised the right to bestow authority on vassals; in the third and second centuries B.C. it was hardly possible to call on the living memory of an effective government over which the kings of Chou had presided.[7] All that did survive – and this was to be of great significance in imperial times – was the ideal or fiction that the kings of Chou constituted repositories of moral virtues that called for universal respect and emulation.

A number of historical incidents illustrate the process of change and the contradiction that could sometimes be implied. In the troubled interval between the collapse of Ch'in power and the establishment of the Han dynasty, Liu Pang's principal opponent, Hsiang Yü, so far from accepting imperial unity as the ideal form of government, seems to have envisaged a much looser arrangement, more like a confederacy.[8] At a later period, the idea that imperial sovereignty rested not so much on the naked facts of conquest as on the recognition of solemn obligations or the gift from Heaven could sometimes raise awkward questions. It could be asked how the establishment of the Han empire, achieved in fact by military means, could be justified on moral grounds; sometimes contradictory answers were given.[9]

An unavoidable conflict could also arise by examining two principles that were combined in the accepted view of sovereignty, the right to rule by virtue of the gift or mandate of Heaven, and the system of hereditary succession that was actually in force. In this way the relative value of an individual's merit as a ruler and the strength of an inherited position came

7 For the effectiveness of the government of Western Chou, at least in its early stages, see Herrlee G. Creel, *The origins of statecraft in China*, Vol. I. *The Western Chou empire* (Chicago and London, 1970); reviewed by Michael Loewe in *BSOAS* 35:2 (1972), 395–400. 8 See Chapter 2 above, p. 116.

9 This question arose on at least two occasions. See *SC* 121, pp. 3122f. (Burton Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian of China: Translated from the* Shih-chi *of Ssu-ma Ch'ien* [New York and London, 1961], Vol. II, pp. 403f.); *Han shu* 88, p. 3612; *HS* 75, pp. 3176f.; and Michael Loewe "The authority of the emperors of Ch'in and Han," in *State and law in East Asia: Festschrift Karl Bünger*, ed. Dieter Eikemeier and Herbert Franke (Wiesbaden, 1981), pp. 82–83.

into question, by no means for the last time in imperial history.[10] In addition, the imperial succession itself and the incidents in which it was subject to manipulation reflect different ways in which the role and function of the emperor was viewed. The Sons of Heaven had included some men whose character and personality were such that they left their stamp on public affairs by exerting their powers of leadership; but the enthronement of infants tells its own tale of the absence of any real power vested in the occupant of the throne. As the religious and intellectual sanctions of imperial sovereignty grew in significance, there may well have occurred a diminution of the actual political powers that an emperor exercised.

THE INSTITUTION OF RULERSHIP

The books compiled shortly before the unification include several important statements regarding the origin of rulership. According to some writers, the institution is explained as man's answer to dire necessity. Unlike animals, human beings do not possess the natural protective equipment that enables them to survive the hazards of a competitive existence. They must therefore group together for self-defense; they must accept the constraints of leadership to withstand the risks that they face, and work together in harmony and progress toward a higher standard of civilization.

This theme is propounded both in a chapter of the eclectic *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* and, perhaps with greater force, in the *Hsün-tzu;* both texts are from the third century B.C.[11] The passage in the *Hsün-tzu* points out the superiority of human beings over other creatures, and describes how skills may be acquired and improved by appointing the appropriate persons to the tasks most suited to their abilities. Rulership is necessary to ensure that such apportionments are just and suitable; in this way it will be possible to prevent the outbreak of strife and to encourage the fulfillment of human virtues.

These are realistic explanations of the origin of the institution. It is of interest that both of the texts that include these statements were closely associated with the kingdom of Ch'in. The *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* was compiled at the behest of a statesman working in Ch'in and calling on local writers to submit their views, and Hsün Ch'ing had included among his pupils not only Han Fei, but also Li Ssu.[12] The influence on Ch'in political theory of the principles expounded in these passages should not be underestimated.

10 For example, see Han Yü's essay "Tui Yü wen," in Ma T'ung-po, ed., *Han Ch'ang-li wen-chi chiao-chu* (Shanghai, 1957), pp. 17–18.

11 *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* 20 ("Shih chün lan"), p. 1a; *Hsün-tzu* 9 ("Wang chih"), pp. 109f.

12 See Derk Bodde, *China's first unifier: A study of the Ch'in dynasty as seen in the life of Li Ssu, (280?-208 B.C.)* (Leiden, 1938; rpt. Hong Kong, 1967), pp. 12f., 57f.

In addition, these same sources include other statements that may likewise be of distinct relevance to the formation of political theory at this time, but which are based on somewhat different ideas. In the case of the *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu,* this is hardly surprising, as the book derived from a number of hands. The following passage from that work links three cardinal ideas in the theory of imperial sovereignty as this came to be formed a century or so later. These are the part played by Heaven in ordaining dynastic power, the control exercised by the Five Phases, and the occurrence of omens to foretell the rise of a particular house.[13]

Whenever a sovereign or king is about to rise to power, Heaven will certainly manifest a favourable sign to mankind in advance. At the time of the Yellow Emperor [a mythological ruler] Heaven had displayed creatures of the earth, such as worms, beforehand. The Yellow Emperor said that the energy of earth was in the ascendant; and in those circumstances he singled out yellow for prominence among the colours and modelled his actions on earth. In the time of Yü [founder of the Hsia dynasty] Heaven had displayed grasses and trees that were not killed off in autumn or winter. Yü said that the energy of wood was in the ascendant; and in those circumstances he singled out green for prominence among the colours and modelled his actions on wood. In the time of T'ang [founder of the Shang dynasty] Heaven had first shown how metal blades were produced from liquid. T'ang said that the energy of metal was in the ascendant; and in those circumstances he singled out white for prominence among the colours and modelled his actions on metal. In the time of King Wen [effective founder of the Chou dynasty] Heaven had displayed fire, with scarlet birds holding texts inscribed in red in their beaks, and assembling at the altars of Chou. King Wen said that the energy of fire was in the ascendant; and in those circumstances he singled out red for prominence among the colours and modelled his actions on fire.

It will of course be the energy of water that must displace that of fire, and Heaven will make a display of water in advance, so that the energy of water will come into the ascendant. When that occurs, the ruler will single out black for prominence among the colours and model his action on water.

The author of this passage evidently saw no difficulty in combining two ideas that are basically inconsistent – the will exerted by a superhuman power that may be arbitrary, and a sequence that is dictated regularly by a universal cycle. The ability to reconcile these two ideas is of considerable importance in later Han thought.

A further principle, clearly stated in the *Hsün-tzu*, is at variance with ideas that were of major significance in the imperial age. In at least two

13 *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* 13 ("Ying t'ung"), p. 4a. (Loewe, *Chinese ideas of life and death: Faith, myth and reason in the Han period* [London, 1982], pp. 46–7). The "texts inscribed in red" were books thought to describe the ways of antiquity. King Wu of Chou had been informed that they contained information regarding the Yellow Emperor and other mythological rulers, and wished to consult them. Their description as "red" implies that they had been written in imperishable materials.

passages[14] it is maintained that the personal qualities and achievements of the individual are of greater value than the institutions of state and that they transcend the claims of heredity. This principle was of obvious value to those sovereigns who had won their way to the throne by force of personal leadership or conquest, such as the First Ch'in emperor and Han Kao-ti. But such an argument would not necessarily accord with an invocation of the heavenly mandate as a source of legitimate authority. Nor would it accord with the practice of hereditary succession to the throne, or a supposition that the emperor's function was that of reigning rather than actually ruling, in accordance with the guideline of *wu-wei*.[15]

Documents which date from shortly after the foundation of the Ch'in empire refer to the achievements of the First Emperor almost entirely in terms of the personal credit that was his due. Beyond a bare tribute to the aid due to the ancestral shrines, there is little inclination to acknowledge the role of any superhuman power in leading him forward to success. The Ch'in emperor's position rested on his conquest of his rivals, his pacification of all known territories, and the extension of a centralized administration on the basis of a single, coordinated system of laws. One statement includes the boast that such achievements were unprecedented; in this way the claim was consistent with the choice of the new title of *huang-ti*, which would be perpetuated forever.[16]

ETHICAL VALUES AND THE FAILINGS OF CH'IN

One of the earliest contributions to political theory to be written during the Han period is the *Hsin-yü* (New analects) of Lu Chia, to whom reference has been made above.[17] Comparatively little attention has been paid to this author and his work, possibly because he has been overshadowed by some of his successors. Many of Lu Chia's ideas were expressed with greater force by Tung Chung-shu, and while that writer is generally acclaimed as a syncretist, it is sometimes forgotten that the sources on which he may have drawn deserve respect for their originality.[18] Thus the *New analects* was compiled at the express order of Kao-ti (r. 206–195), some decades before Tung Chung-shu's birth.

In setting out to be a guide for the maintenance of effective government, the text refers to the importance of strange phenomena and their admoni-

14 *Hsün-tzu* 12 ("Chün tao"), pp. 158f.; *Hsün-tzu* 18 ("Cheng lun"), pp. 234f.
15 See Chapter 12 above, p. 693; and p. 744 below.
16 *SC* 6, pp. 235f. (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, pp. 122f.); Chapter 1 above, pp. 53f.
17 See Chapter 12 above, p. 709.
18 For Lu Chia and Tung Chung-shu, see Michael Loewe, "Imperial sovereignty: Dong Zhongshu's contribution and his predecessors" (forthcoming).

tory significance. As has been seen, these ideas were expounded in a forceful and systematic way by Tung Chung-shu. In addition, the *New analects* stresses the need for imperial government to attend to the ethical values of the Confucian scheme as a means of attaining an ordered state of affairs; it also advises an emperor to regulate his activities in such a way that they will conform with the rhythm of *yin* and *yang*.

Lu Chia's ideas derived from a realization that there could be faults in the practice of imperial sovereignty. There are signs that a number of leading men were well aware of the failure of the Ch'in empire to resist attack despite its much-vaunted strength, and both Lu Chia and later writers were trying to answer the obvious question: how had so mighty an organization been destroyed by a band of weak, badly led, and badly armed insurgents? It is possible that they were writing in response to a further question, perhaps tacitly suggested but never mentioned overtly: how could Han avoid a similar fate?

According to Lu Chia, Ch'in's failure had been due to its excessive application of punishments, its arrogance, and its extravagance. Some twenty or thirty years later, Chia I wrote an essay in three parts discussing the nature of Ch'in's shortcomings.[19] He again stressed the need for imperial government to make a positive effort to respect ethical values. His near-contemporary of the same surname but a different family, Chia Shan, took the opportunity to introduce two other ideas.[20] He urged Wen-ti (r. 180–157 B.C.) to emulate the example of government left by the kings of Chou; this had been marked by care for their subjects' well-being, and by willingness to listen to criticism from their ministers.

Attention to ethical values was reinforced during Wu-ti's reign (141–87) by a number of measures taken to recruit candidates for official posts on the basis of their familiarity with Confucian writings.[21] These texts now formed the intellectual background of officials and statesmen, and would continue to play this role. Such measures exerted an ineluctable influence on the developing view of sovereignty. Official preference for the precepts of Confucius and for the writings associated with him, and rejection of the writings of the more practical, realist men of affairs such as Shang Yang, Shen Pu-hai, and Han Fei, may well have owed its origin to a proposal of Tung Chung-shu.[22]

19 The three parts appear variously as follows: Part 1, in *SC* 6, pp. 278–82 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, pp. 225–31); *SC* 48, pp. 1962–65; *HS* 31, pp. 1821–25. Part 2, in *SC* 6, pp. 283–84 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, pp. 231–36). Part 3, in *SC* 6, pp. 276–78 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, pp. 219–24). For Chia I, see Chapter 2 above, pp. 144f.

20 *HS* 51, p. 2327.

21 See Chapter 12 above, pp. 703f.; and Chapter 14 below, pp. 754f.

22 *HS* 56, p. 2523.

TUNG CHUNG-SHU

Reference has been made above to the ideas expounded by Tung Chung-shu and his inclusion of a place for imperial sovereignty in a universal order.[23] His scheme reiterated the combination of concepts seen in the *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu*, whereby the authority of Heaven was associated with the cyclical rhythm of the Five Phases; to this he added his own extended and elaborate view of the importance of omens and portents. As far as we can tell, no writer repeated this theme between the contributor to the *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* and Tung Chung-shu. Apart from attempts that were made as part of Huang-lao thought, no other scheme is known at this time which explains imperial rule as an integral part of a major system of the universe.

Tung Chung-shu also refers to the Mandate of Heaven. Although the concept did not acquire great importance until after his death, Tung may also have broken new ground in his rehabilitation of the term, which had been a major element of Chou political philosophy for some centuries before the Ch'in and Han periods. It is seen in early texts such as the *Book of songs* and the *Book of documents*, and later in one crucial passage in the *Mencius*.[24] The doctrine was usually invoked as the compelling authority which sanctioned Chou's dispossession of its predecessor, but it is not seen so clearly in books such as the *Tso-chuan* or the *Analects*. During the Warring States period, the idea could hardly have been taken as valid support for any of the rival kings, especially as a king of Chou actually continued to exist as late as 256 B.C. When the doctrine reappeared, in the context of imperial government, it had acquired new implications. It could not be separated from the new theories that link heaven, earth, and man together; and it was to be coupled with the emperor's participation in the worship of Heaven.

Several references ascribe to Heaven the credit for bringing about Kao-ti's victory and the establishment of the Han empire; but for these early days of imperial history, there is so far no statement of the specific bestowal of the mandate on his dynastic house.[25] Indeed, one telling reference to the mandate specifically observes that while Chou had enjoyed the benefit of its dispensation, this had not been vouchsafed to Han.[26] In the three contexts

23 See Chapter 12 above, pp. 708f.

24 *Shih-ching* nos. 235, 244, 303, 305 (Bernhard Karlgren, *The Book of odes* [Stockholm, 1950], pp. 185f., 198, 262f., 265–66). For the *Shu-ching* see Bernhard Karlgren, "The Book of documents," *BMFEA*, 22 (1950), 20, 37, 39, 59. For Mencius, see Legge, *The Chinese classics*, Vol. II, p. 297. See also Creel, *Origins of statecraft in China*, pp. 82f.

25 For example, *HS* 1B, p. 71 (Homer H. Dubs, *The History of the Former Han dynasty* [Baltimore, 1938–55], Vol. I, p. 131). For other references, see Loewe, "Authority of the emperors," p. 87.

26 *SC* 99, p. 2715 (Watson, *Records*, Vol. I, p. 285); *HS* 43, p. 2119.

where Tung Chung-shu mentions the concept, there is no specific allusion to the Han dynasty's receipt of this solemn charge.[27] The development of the idea and its application to an imperial house had to await the contributions of K'uang Heng and Pan Piao (see below).

Tung Chung-shu left his mark on the ideas of sovereignty in the type of criticism which he leveled against Ch'in. Hitherto such criticism had been prompted largely by the need to account for Ch'in's failure; explanations for this were largely offered in terms of Ch'in's policies and their inescapable results. With Tung Chung-shu, a new characteristic appears which was destined to be of greater permanence than any of the views expressed before him. He roundly and bitterly arraigns the regime of Ch'in on moral grounds. Its measures had struck at the basis of Chinese civilization itself. Rather than fastening on the practical failings of excessively harsh government, Tung chose to blame Ch'in for its grave injustices.[28] In so doing, he set a pattern of criticism of Ch'in that only exceptional historians and statesmen have been ready to discount. He added a new force to the proposition that imperial government is responsible for adhering to certain ethical standards and for encouraging the pursuit of cultural activities.

Tung Chung-shu also draws a distinction that could often be overlooked by those men of later ages who perpetually advocated a return to traditional values and ideas. While he states that the basic principles of imperial government remain unchanged, deriving as they do from Heaven, decisions of policy that concern expedients should always be altered in order to suit the changing circumstances of the different ages to which they apply.[29]

Many of these ideas are expressed in the following passage, which occurs in one of Tung Chung-shu's memorials to the throne:[30]

The ordinances of Heaven are termed destiny and these cannot be put into operation except by a man of saintly qualities. The fundamental substance of man is termed human nature, and this cannot be fulfilled save by cultural example and precept. Human desires are termed emotion and these cannot be moderated save by regulations. This is why the man who is a true monarch pays careful attention on the one hand to receiving the intention of Heaven, so that he may conform with destiny. On the other hand he strives to educate his people intelligently, so that their natures may be fulfilled. He establishes correct norms for his institutions, distinguishing between the upper and the lower orders of humanity so as to preclude desire; and if he will devote himself to achieving these three aims, the fundamental basis of his being will be established.

Man receives his destiny from Heaven and is thereby pre-eminently different from other creatures. . . .

27 *HS* 56, pp. 2498, 2501, 2516. 28 *HS* 56, pp. 2504, 2510, 2519.
29 *HS* 56, pp. 2518f. 30 *HS* 56, p. 2515 (Loewe, *Ideas of life and death*, p. 150).

THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN: PAN PIAO'S ESSAY

New force was lent to the idea of the mandate during the reign of Yüan-ti (49–33 B.C.). This was a time when a number of changes in policy were introduced that have been categorized as a reformist reaction against the intensively progressive measures of Wu-ti's reign (141–87 B.C.). Such changes were accompanied by the expression of new views of political theory, and they were followed by religious changes of a corresponding nature.[31]

In about 45 B.C., K'uang Heng, superintendent of the palace, who is known for his part in the reform of religious practice, commented on a number of political issues and expressed his view of sovereignty.[32] This included the implicit assumption that rulers had received their mandate, and that their duty lay in transmitting their inheritance as a possession forever. While this assumption might have been accepted a century previously by a few men such as Tung Chung-shu, to many of K'uang Heng's time it may well have conveyed a somewhat new message. K'uang Heng described the connection between the continuation of sovereignty and the blessings conveyed by spiritual powers; these were not only those of Heaven, but also those of the *kuei* and the *shen*.[33] He also invoked precedents from the past, mainly from the glorious kings of Chou. K'uang Heng further insisted on the need for continuity and consistency; human beings should be guided in such a way that they will be able to fulfil their nature, and they may then proceed to a higher state of moral behavior.

The importance of the mandate was underlined in the course of the abortive attempt to renew the Han dynasty's cycle in 5 B.C. It was even suggested on that occasion that Ch'eng-ti's (r. 33–7 B.C.) failure to produce an heir had been due to his inability to respond to the mandate's demands.[34] Shortly afterward the doctrine is set out in what is perhaps the most complete and clear statement of political principles that had yet appeared in Chinese literature in Pan Piao's essay, "Wang-ming lun" (The destiny of kings).

Pan Piao (ca. A.D. 3–54) was the father of Pan Ku and the first contributor to the *Han shu*. He had witnessed the rise and fall of Wang Mang's dynasty (A.D. 9–23) and the years of civil war that had finally ended in the reestablishment of the Han house under Liu Hsiu (Kuang-wu-ti, r. A.D. 25–57). The object of his essay lay in demonstrating to contenders for

31 See Chapter 2 above, pp. 198f.; Chapter 12 above, pp. 663f.

32 *HS* 81, pp. 3338f. For K'uang Heng's part in the religious reforms, see Michael Loewe, *Crisis and conflict in Han China* (London, 1974), pp. 158f.

33 See Chapter 12 above, p. 668.

34 *HS* 75, p. 3192; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 278f.

power such as Wei Ao or Kung-sun Shu that the house of Liu was fully entitled to claim and to exercise authority to rule. This remarkable document[35] reaffirms the cause of imperial unity. This had been established very recently by Wang Mang, partly on the plea that Heaven had entrusted him with the task. It was clearly of the utmost importance to demonstrate that the regime of Kuang-wu-ti could be supported on the same ground.

From the outset, Pan Piao's essay reasserts the principle of Heaven's apportionment of the right to rule. This is shown in respect of some of the mythical sovereigns, Yao and Shun, and Yü, founder of the Hsia dynasty; all received their charge from Heaven. For however different the circumstances in which they succeeded, they were identical in just this matter, that they took their places in response to Heaven and in conformity with the will of the people. Continuity of rule could be traced from the blessed Yao right through to the house of Liu, as had been shown in a number of incidents and omens. These illustrated the direct succession, under the aegis of the power of red, the color representing one of the Five Phases. Only on such a basis could an imperial authority expect to receive the blessing of the *kuei* and the *shen* and to become an object of universal loyal service.

Pan Piao then discusses the circumstances in which the Han dynasty had been founded. He declares outright that the popular belief that Han had won its position at a time of discord thanks to the good fortune of its material strength was misconceived. Such a view, he asserts, fails to realize that the holy instrument of office, the imperial seal, is the property of the mandate, and that it is not acquired by the exercise of intelligence or strength. Such a misconception had been responsible for producing rebels and traitors, resting as it did on a failure to comprehend the principles of Heaven or to understand the activities of man.

All men, from the Son of Heaven in his nobility to the pauper in his distress, have their appointed destiny; it would be improper for anyone without the right destiny to be placed in the position of emperor. For the right material must be used for the right task, or disaster will ensue. Pan Piao reminded his readers of several examples from past history of rather unexpected incidents; how, on occasion, some of the humblest and least informed in the land had been able to understand or foresee the destiny that awaited some of the most prominent. They could comprehend how a particular aspirant to power was destined to succeed or to fail in his ambitions.

By contrast with cases that might seem to be in doubt, five indications

35 *HS* 100A, pp. 4207f. (William Theodore de Bary, Wing-tsit Chan, Burton Watson, comp. *Sources of Chinese tradition* [New York, 1960], Vol. 1, pp. 176f.).

showed quite clearly that the original founder of Han, Kao-ti (r. 206–195 B.C.), had possessed qualities that marked him as a recipient of the mandate. He was descended from Yao; his body was marked by distinguishing features; his spiritual and martial qualities were verified in fact; he possessed generosity of character and a philanthropic disposition; and he could judge whether a man would be fit to shoulder a particular duty. In addition to other virtues, Kao-ti's power of strategic planning enabled him to found his inheritance; phenomena that had been correctly reported showed that he had received his mandate from Heaven, rather than that he had established his power by human strength alone. Pan Piao concludes with a stern warning on the need to heed the message of omens and to comprehend the importance of destiny; failure to do so could only end in ruin. He begs his readers to take due notice and not to aspire to positions that are not theirs to attain.

Pan Piao's views reflect contemporary developments, such as the strength that Wang Mang was attaching to portents and the final acceptance that Heaven formed the correct object of worship in the imperial cult. Such ideas were not entirely consistent with the principle of hereditary succession. Inherent in the doctrine of the mandate is the implication that the supreme situation of the emperor must not be left vacant, but must always have an incumbent. This is also brought out in one of the documents that accompanied the abdication in A.D. 220 of the last Han emperor, Hsien-ti, in favor of the king of Wei.[36]

> The mandate of Heaven brooks no refusal and the holy instrument of office may not be abandoned for long. The servants of state may not be left without a master and the many cares of government may not be left without control.

THE CHOICE OF THE PATRON ELEMENT

The identification of the element (wood, fire, earth, metal, or water) under whose aegis the dynasty was thought to be protected was a highly significant act. These elements were the symbols of the Five Phases of being. Choice of the patron element constituted a declaration of faith that the dynasty was entitled to its appropriate place in the universal and unbreakable sequence; it also affirmed the view of how the dynasty fitted in that cycle and thereby defined its relationship to its predecessors.

It has already been seen that even the practical-minded statesmen of Ch'in had apparently been ready to conform to these principles by announcing that the dynasty was protected by water, but some attention has been

36 *SKC* 2 (Wei 2), p. 75 note 3.

paid to the suggestion that this report was anachronistic rather than based on reality.[37] It seems clear that Han retained the belief that the dynasty existed under the patronage of water, although this is never definitely stated. It may, however, be inferred from suggestions that a change should be made to earth in ca. 180 and 166 B.C. These proposals were never adopted, and the first change that actually occurred took place in 104 B.C., along with several other symbolic changes, such as the adoption of a newly adjusted calendar and a new reign title. This was a year in which the Han government was clearly conscious, or even proud, of its achievements and was anxious to display its glory.[38]

Philosophical difficulties were involved in the choice of the element, insofar as the decision had perforce to follow one of several views of the sequence of changes in the universal cycle. In addition, the choice could characterize a previous imperial dispensation as that of a valid or a usurping ruler. When Former Han adopted earth in 104 B.C., it was conforming to the theory that one phase of existence came into being by supplanting or conquering its predecessor; this was the order of phases, elements, and temporal regimes found in the passage from the *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* cited above.[39] However, subsequent decisions that were taken by Han governments were based on the belief that the phases succeeded one another not by means of conquest, but as a result of natural growth. In addition, they reveal the implicit understanding that, despite its decision of 104 B.C., Han had actually existed under the aegis of fire. In this way, Wang Mang also affirmed that his dynasty corresponded to the phase symbolized by earth, but his reasons for choosing the same element as Former Han were very different. Former Han had chosen earth to demonstrate its successful conquest of Ch'in. Wang Mang took the view that Han had existed under the patronage of fire, and that the natural successor to fire was earth.[40]

In choosing metal as his element, Kung-sun Shu evidently accepted that Former Han had enjoyed the blessing of earth, which would be followed by metal in the natural course of events. When Kuang-wu-ti chose fire, he did so in the belief that this symbolized continuity not only with Former Han, but also with Yao, to whom he was glad to trace his succession. Kuang-wu-ti's choice bore a further implication that was of no small consequence to the emergent view of Chinese dynastic history. By omitting Wang Mang

37 See Chapter 1 above, pp. 77f., 96.

38 See Chapter 2 above, p. 172; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, Chapter 1; Michael Loewe, "Water, earth, and fire – the symbols of the Han dynasty," *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens/Hamburg*, 125 (1979), 64; *SC* 96, p. 2681; Takigawa Kametarō, *Shiki kaichū kōshō* (Tokyo, 1932–34; rpt. Peking, 1955), Vol. X, pp. 32–33 (note). 39 See p. 730 above.

40 *HS* 99A, p. 4095 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 258); *HS* 99B, pp. 4112f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 288f.).

and his adoption of earth from his calculations, Kuang-wu-ti was branding the Hsin dynasty as the regime of a usurper, which merited no proper place in the natural sequence of temporal dispensations.[41]

THE VIEWS OF WANG CH'UNG AND WANG FU

Wang Ch'ung could hardly be expected to agree that Heaven is willing to interfere in the affairs of man to the extent of specifically conferring authority to rule on a particular dynastic house. In addition, it is in keeping with his realistic outlook to argue that, whatever the assumptions of tradition and dogma may be, there was no a priori reason to regard the dispensation of a contemporary regime as being necessarily inferior to that of a predecessor, or to the golden ages of the past.[42] It is therefore perhaps surprising, at first sight, to find that he refers not only to kings Wen and Wu of Chou as monarchs who had received the mandate, but also to the founding emperors of Han, Kao-ti and Kuang-wu-ti, in those terms. Possibly Wang Ch'ung is simply referring to a commonly accepted cliché, without accepting its validity or giving his approval.

The same explanation may apply to a further passage in which Wang Ch'ung writes of Kao-ti's destiny and suitability for assumption of sovereignty.[43] Elsewhere, Wang Ch'ung writes of the personal talent that fits men to hold high posts of either a civil or a military nature, but he warns his readers that whether they actually achieve such eminence may well depend on destiny.[44] It may be remarked that in such contexts, Wang Ch'ung refers to *ming*, (destiny); he does not seem to use the expression *t'ien-ming* (Mandate of Heaven).

Wang Fu presented his criticism of the contemporary scene from the point of view of an observer who, so far from being personally involved in the conduct of affairs of state, had taken refuge outside the confines and obligations of an official's life. His remarks on the way in which imperial sovereignty could operate are pungent. He had little confidence in the system of hereditary succession; this could not ensure that there would be incumbents who possessed sufficient moral stature, determination, and ability to govern. He pointed out how there were some examples of men who had won their way to fame and successful achievement without the benefit of an inherited position; there were also examples of the shortcom-

41 For Kung-sun Shu, see *HHS* 13, p. 538. For Kuang-wu-ti's choice, see *HHS* 1A, p. 27; and Bielenstein, *Restoration*, Vol. II, p. 233.

42 *Lun-heng* 19 ("Hsüan Han" and "Hui kuo"), pp. 817f., 826f. (Alfred Forke, *Lun-heng*, [Shanghai, London, and Leipzig, 1907 and 1911], Vol. II, pp. 192f., 201f.).

43 *LH* 3 ("Ou-hui"), p. 99 (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. II, p. 8).

44 *LH* 1 ("Ming lu"), p. 21 (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, p. 146).

ings and failures of those whose prominence rested solely on the circumstances of their birth.[45]

THE DEBT TO CH'IN AND WANG MANG

For all the doubts that Wang Ch'ung may have entertained and for all the weaknesses that Wang Fu observed, the system of imperial government that had been instituted in Ch'in and Han survived with many of its features as the natural framework for political authority until the twentieth century. That framework had been formed on the basis of very different principles; it derived by no means exclusively from the orthodox philosophy and type of rule that is loosely described as Confucian. It is a paradox that the success and survival of the imperial system arose in part from the contributions of two short-lived regimes that have been denigrated consistently in the Chinese tradition, that of the First Ch'in emperor and that of Wang Mang. For while the harsh insistence on civil obedience, intellectual conformity, and social discipline that is ascribed to Ch'in has from time to time formed an essential part of China's government, the later dynasties could not have asserted their right to rule without appealing to the same type of religious and intellectual support that had taken manifest shape during Wang Mang's dispensation.

From Later Han onward, no contestant for power could afford to ignore the principle of the heavenly mandate, and for many centuries it was essential to maintain that the emperor and his house were taking their rightful place in the cycle of the Five Phases. With the passage of time and the complexities of dynastic history it became necessary to take note of the simultaneous existence of several regimes and to determine which one was entitled to claim legitimacy. For such reasons, historians and propagandists found it necessary to evolve the theory of legitimate succession (*cheng-t'ung*). Some of the most brilliant minds of the Sung period bent their intellects to the task of analyzing the problems that were involved and of reconciling the ways of human government with major theories of being.[46]

THE DIGNITY OF THE THRONE

In the course of the long dynastic history of the house of Liu, procedures were formulated that served to enhance the position and dignity of the

45 *Ch'ien-fu lun* 1 ("Lun jung"), pp. 32f. For further views of Wang Fu on sovereignty, see Chapter 15 below, pp. 789f.

46 For texts on the *cheng-t'ung*, see Jao Tsung-i, *Chung-kuo shih-hsüeh shang chih cheng-t'ung lun* (Hong Kong, 1977). See also Chapter 5 above, pp. 373f.

emperor. It has been shown above[47] that from the outset of Former Han, a series of incidents had occurred in which possession of the throne had been subject to challenge or manipulation. Whatever the actual circumstances of such incidents may have been – and it is necessary to bear in mind that here, perhaps more than elsewhere, we are presented with a record that is almost certain to be biased – the historians' accounts tell a tale of formal procedures and steps that were duly regulated and authorized, so that their validity could not easily be brought into question.[48]

From the accession of Wen-ti in the face of potential opposition (180 B.C.) until the abdication of Hsien-ti (A.D. 220), the succession, deposition, or voluntary withdrawal of emperors are described as occasions of dignity and solemnity. Accession followed consultation by prominent statesmen and officials of the day. The candidates who were chosen to reign are shown as making solemn protestations of their inability to do so and of their ethical shortcomings, before finally bowing to the expressed will of the officials that they should mount the imperial throne. This show of reluctance came to be formalized; sometimes it had to be repeated three times before, in all decency, it could be abandoned.

In the meantime the senior officials of state, who were possibly witnessing the fulfillment of their ambitions, were duly arrayed in their correct order of precedence, behaving with scrupulous regard for the formalities of the occasion. In the rare cases of a deposition or of a direct invitation to a member of the imperial house to become emperor, the decision was conveyed by means of documents or submissions to which the senior ministers of state had all put their names. The reasons put forward for the proposed change of incumbency of the throne relied on the highest principles of ethics.[49] Sometimes there were signs that the principles which were involved were contradictory, or that they could be exploited in the interests of different candidates. On the death of Chao-ti (74 B.C.), it was argued that primogeniture should not necessarily be sufficient to ensure succession; in certain circumstances, an elder son could be displaced in favor of his younger brother.[50] The question of the degree of relationship arose again in 8 B.C., when it became necessary to choose between different candidates and to determine whether a half-brother or a half-nephew of an emperor had a better claim.[51]

A constitutional difficulty could sometimes occur at the death of the emperor, or on other occasions when the succession was in doubt. At such moments there would be no Son of Heaven who could approve decisions of

47 See Chapters 2–5 above. 48 See Loewe, "The authority of the emperors," pp. 101f.
49 *HS* 68, pp. 2937f.; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 119f.
50 *HS* 68, p. 2937. 51 *HS* 81, pp. 3354f.; *HS* 97B, pp. 4000f.

state. If it became necessary to establish an approved authority that could do so, an empress dowager could fill the role. In an early instance when this occurred (74 B.C.), the procedure seems almost to have been a deliberate farce intended to validate decisions taken by the statesmen of the day. The empress dowager was aged a mere fifteen years, and the candidate for whom she gave solemn approval was the luckless Liu Ho. It was likewise thanks to the empress dowager's authority that twenty-seven days later he was deposed, and Liu Ping-i, the future Hsüan-ti, was summoned to the throne at the age of eighteen.[52] That powers of this nature were later given to an empress dowager may well have strengthened the position of some contenders for power during Later Han.

A number of formal steps accompanied accession. The material symbol of imperial rule was the seal with which documents were authenticated, probably made of jade and designated by a special term.[53] Removal of the seal constituted the termination of an individual's authority, and it was not always achieved without a struggle.[54] Accession was sometimes marked by a service of purification, or by a formal visit paid to the ancestral shrines to display how dynastic continuity was being maintained. Reference has been made above to other religious duties in which the emperor took part, whether in the services addressed to the five *ti* or to Heaven (*t'ien*), or in the very rare occasions of an ascent of Mount T'ai.[55]

Other ways in which the dignity of the throne was enhanced lay in the provisions of the ritual prescriptions (*li*). Very shortly after the founding of Han, one of Kao-ti's advisors, Shu-sun T'ung, had criticized the lack of formality and propriety that were appropriate for an imperial court; he was allowed to draw up provisions to rectify this sad state of affairs. Detailed prescriptions came into being later that concerned the emperor's deportment and served to emphasize his superior status in many aspects of daily life. As in other respects the provisions of *li* expressed social distinctions and sought to reinforce the notion of the emperor as standing above and beyond other men, at the top of the hierarchy.[56]

52 *HS* 8, pp. 235f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 199f.); *HS* 63, pp. 2765f.; *HS* 68, pp. 2937f.; Loewe, *Crisis and conflict*, pp. 76f.

53 That is, *hsi*; for the use of this term for members of the imperial family, see Nan-ching po-wu-yüan, "Chiang-su Han-chiang Kan-ch'üan erh hao Han mu," *WW*, 1981.11, 10. For the jade seal of an empress of Former Han, see Ch'in Po, "Hsi-Han huang-hou yü-hsi ho Kan-lu erh nien t'ung-fang-lu ti fa-hsien," *WW*, 1973.5, 26–29.

54 *HHS* 6, p. 250; *HHS* 10B, p. 455.

55 See Chapter 12 above, pp. 661f.

56 For example, see *HHS* (tr.) 6, pp. 3141f.; *HHS* (tr.) 29, pp. 3639f.; and *HHS* (tr.) 30, pp. 3661f. for regulations concerning transport, dress, and funerary equipment. See Chapter 12 above, pp. 706f., for *li*; and Chapter 4, p. 296, for the attention paid to *li* in A.D. 86. See also other documents such as those whose fragments have been collected in *Han-kuan liu-chung* (SPPY ed.); and Chen Tsu-lung, *Index du Han-kouan ts'i-tchong* (Paris, 1962). For Shu-sun T'ung, see *HS* 22, p. 1030 (A. F. P. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han law* [Leiden, 1955], p. 433).

THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE EMPEROR

These procedures and formalities were developed at a time when statesmen and officials were exerting an ever-growing influence on decisions of state and contending among themselves for power in politics. There were a number of occasions, from the reign of the second Ch'in emperor onward, when the emperor was in no sense capable of wielding authority and was no more than a tool in the hands of others. In general terms, although the symbolic importance of the emperor was steadily increasing, the part that he played in government was diminishing to the point of disappearance. To the question why, if the emperor himself was virtually powerless, it was still of great importance to manipulate the succession, the answer must surely be that, notwithstanding his lack of political influence, the formal authority of his position remained paramount. If government was to be respected as being anything more than the exploitation of the expedient, and if statesmen wished to claim that their authority had a legitimate backing, it must be seen to derive from the Son of Heaven. An ambitious official must realize that he was subject to a sovereign; and he must therefore prevent a strong candidate, whom he could not hope to control, from ascending the throne.

Starting as a successful conqueror who had established his regime by force, by the end of the Han period the emperor had become an instrument of permanence. He personified an ideal that outlasted the rise and fall of individuals; his accession, death, and succession were stages in the natural and continuing cycle of being of the *wu-hsing*. However, this process could sometimes contain the seeds of its own weakness. The maintenance of continuity carried with it the duty of producing and nominating an heir. From the need to fulfil this duty there followed the complex matrimonial system that would ensure the birth of a son, and the consequent rivalries and disputes that sometimes threatened the unity or even the survival of the dynasty.

By claiming that they were the Sons of Heaven, emperors immediately showed themselves as recipients of power imparted by a superhuman authority; it could be asserted that they were acting in response to a mission. This was in itself sufficient to form a focus of obedience and loyal service that could transcend the demands put forward simply on behalf of a human authority. By worshipping Heaven the emperors became, like the kings of Chou before them, religious functionaries at the highest possible level. They were the only individuals entitled to carry out certain rites; in certain instances, such as the services conducted at Mount T'ai, secrecy set this function apart from the religious performances of a lower order in which ordinary mortals took part.

The emperor was the only individual who sought direct communication

with Heaven in this way, and his observance of other religious ceremonies carried complementary implications. Respect paid at the ancestral shrines expressed continuity with the past; the emperor's part in seasonal rites, such as those that heralded the spring, affirmed his place in the eternal cycles of nature. In all these respects he was fulfilling the duty of maintaining an harmonious balance between the realms of Heaven, earth, and man.

The emperor also constituted a moral exemplar, as the repository and manifestation of those virtues thought to be necessary for the proper ordering of mankind and fit for emulation by subordinates. Possession of these qualities was an essential attribute of the man chosen by Heaven to receive its charge, and failure to live up to the requisite standards could provoke Heaven's warnings or anger. Imperial edicts reveal the importance attached to the emperor's ability to achieve these qualities – the virtue or *virtus* (*te*) that would ensure the proper conduct of his mission. Alleged failure to be possessed of *te* could be exploited as a means of changing the succession.

The assumption that, by virtue of his character and qualities, the emperor ensured that the way of life was moral and just could itself be dangerous; for it could serve as a screen behind which unscrupulous statesmen could shelter and prevent their actions from being brought into question. Provided that the emperor could be seen to exist as the guardian of the traditional values and virtues of the house of Chou, it could be difficult to criticize the actions or proposals of a statesman, duly approved by edict, on the grounds of injustice. The qualities that the emperor was assumed to possess were linked with those of the paragon kings of old and the lessons of respected teachers or scriptural texts. In this way intellectual support could be found for the throne that would both complement religious sanction and convey moral authority.

A further characteristic of the emperor's role derived from his function as an upholder of moral values. This was his part as a patron of learning, literature, and the arts. Ideally such occupations distinguished the way of life of the emperor's subjects from that of those who lived beyond the pale. By encouraging the pursuit of a higher way of life, the emperor's dispensation attracted the willing and loyal affiliation of those less fortunate mortals whose upbringing and activities had so far precluded their enjoyment of a more cultured form of existence.

Although the emperor constituted the supreme source of authority on earth, this was subject to certain accepted, if not stated, provisos and conventions. Ideally, in accordance with the principle of no-ado (*wu-wei*),[57]

57 See Chapter 12 above, p. 693. The case for a ruler's adoption of *wu-wei* is set forth in *Huai-nan-tzu* 9, pp. 1a et seq. (Roger T. Ames, *The art of rulership: A study in ancient Chinese political thought* [Honolulu, 1983], pp. 28f., 167f.).

he reigned with his arms folded, in a posture of ease, while his ministers and officials carried out the irksome tasks of administering the empire. Only exceptionally did an emperor take an active part as a leader in war. Ideally, martial valor was decried as a mark of poor stewardship, rather than praised as a form of heroism. In theory, and constitutionally, the appointment of senior officials was in his hands. In practice, the choice was often affected by political considerations and the pressures of rival contending families. Similarly, the approval of the emperor was essential for the promulgation of an edict; in practice, many edicts took the form of agreeing to proposals submitted to the throne by an official.

Ideally, there existed a partnership. The emperor reigned, and his authority was conveyed without the need for him to take positive action; senior ministers of state advised action as necessary and saw that it was taken. In addition, the tradition of remonstrance was well established; if he was tendering unpalatable advice, a minister could claim that he was heeding the dictates of an ancient imperative. It was not just a privilege; it was the positive duty of a subordinate to warn his ruler if he appeared to be embarking on a harmful policy or to be conducting himself in a manner unsuitable to his position. A ruler, for his part, could not evade the responsibility for taking due heed of such admonitions. Failure or refusal to do so could lead to further remonstrance, which called on the terrible lessons of history in which a throne had been toppled by its heedless incumbent. Possibly a situation could arise in which a senior official would need to choose between two different calls on his loyalty; he might need to decide whether he should respond with loyalty to his sovereign, or to the ideals on whose basis he had been trained, and which the throne was failing to honor.

Insofar as the statues and ordinances came into being as a result of his will, the emperor was the sole source of the laws of Ch'in and Han. There was never any suggestion that the laws of the empire owed their origin to revelation from a superhuman authority such as Heaven. Nor was there a concept of rules or a constitution to which the emperor was himself subject and which could inhibit his powers of choice. The absence was not entirely unchallenged. Toward the end of the Han period, a critic whose voice has been heard before, Wang Fu, suggested the need for the sovereign to respect the laws if they were to be implemented and if the government of the land was to be stable.[58]

Imperial authority derived from a combination of two interacting factors: the qualities that the man possessed and the powers delegated to him by

58 *CFL* 2 ("Pen cheng"), p. 88.

Heaven. Only if his qualities were sufficient for the task would Heaven vouchsafe to him the powers needed for its fulfillment. These qualities and their power were known as virtue (*te*), and *te* took material form in the bounties that an emperor bestowed upon his subjects. By his distribution of bounties, the emperor illustrated two conflicting principles of sovereignty. In accordance with the Confucian tradition and principle that government existed for the sake of those who were governed, he gave material presents to those in need, thereby acting as the agent of Heaven in relieving distress. But he also conferred gifts and privileges directly as rewards for services that had contributed to the enrichment and strength of the empire. By so doing the emperor was implementing the Legalist principle that the object of government lies in the promotion of its own interests, and that rewards should be used as a means of encouraging service to the state.

The Standard Histories were written by officials partly to justify the existence of the dynasty and partly to illustrate the value of officials in maintaining imperial government; only rarely do they allude to the part played by the Han emperors in person in taking decisions of state or supervising the activities of government. References to the emperor's personal characteristics are suspect insofar as they were selected from a number of attributes or anecdotes, and the choice was affected by subsequent events. But the qualities of the Ch'in and Han emperors have been subsequently cited as examples of good or evil conduct, and they have passed into history no more and no less significantly than the tales of Constantine's conversion to Christianity, the chivalry of the Black Prince, or the indulgences of King Charles the Second. There can have been few candidates for office in imperial China – an equivalent of Macaulay's schoolboy – who were unaware how the First Ch'in emperor, and later how Han Wu-ti, sought to make contact with the world of the immortals; of the masterly strategy displayed by Kao-ti and Kuang-wu-ti in founding and refounding the Han dynasty; of the exemplary thrift practiced by Wen-ti; of Ch'eng-ti's propensity for wandering around Ch'ang-an incognito; or of the visionary dream that led Ming-ti to welcome the faith of the Buddha to Chinese soil.

CHAPTER 14

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONFUCIAN SCHOOLS

When we speak of the development of the Confucian schools in the early phases of China's history, the various meanings of this term should be carefully distinguished. First of all, there is the concrete aspect of the word "school," a rendering of the word *chia* which also means "home, family." As schools began to develop toward the end of the Spring and Autumn period (fifth century B.C.), they consisted of a master, an intimate circle of disciples, and a greater number of students. It is highly likely that such schools originated in the need to instruct young nobles in the necessary arts of court life, to prepare them for the role they were to play as leaders of the community.

At the time of Confucius (the end of the sixth and the beginning of the fifth century B.C.), these arts consisted on the one hand of religious and civil accomplishments: ritual and music, and connected with them a knowledge of certain written traditions shared by most centers of power, especially the *Book of songs* and the *Book of documents;* and on the other hand they consisted of military skills, notably archery and charioteering.[1] Such centers of instruction must have been attached to many of the larger courts of China at this time, and they must have been entirely dependent on the whims of those in power. Confucius too, despite traditions telling of his growing fame as a teacher, was during most of his active life a vassal in the service of the powerful Chi-sun family which furnished the virtual rulers of his home state, Lu.

THE ANCIENT TRADITIONS: PROPONENTS AND DOCUMENTS

Nevertheless, with Confucius and his school a new element enters into ancient Chinese court life: independent reflection on the meaning of the

1 Ssu-ma Ch'ien gives the civil category when speaking of the Confucian school (*Shih-chi* 47, p. 1938; trans. Édouard Chavannes, *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien* [1895–1905; rpt. Paris, 1969], Vol. V, p. 403). The *Chou-li* (3, p. 19a; trans. Édouard Biot, *Le Tcheou-li ou rites des Tcheou* [Paris, 1851], Vol. I, p. 214) speaks of the "six arts" to be taught to the people: rites, music, archery, charioteering, writing, and counting. See also *Chou-li* 4, p. 8a (Biot, *TL*, Vol. I, p. 297).

ancient traditions said to have been formulated during the previous dynasties, especially the Western Chou (twelfth to eighth centuries B.C.). This holds true even if the Confucian school always upheld the ancient "royal" traditions ascribed to the kings of Chou over against a decadent world that had fallen into the hands of upstart rulers. It should be remembered that the Chinese name for what we call Confucians was *ju*, a name which according to early evidence harks back to a pre-Confucian class of specialists in the ritual traditions.[2] Thus, a "school" came to have the meaning of a group or institution which harbored a certain spiritual independence in its relations to the temporal powers. Only in this way can the development of the masters and the hundred schools be explained, as well as the increasingly critical attitudes toward the tradition that gradually developed among the Mohists, the Nominalists, the Taoists, and the Legalists. Some local courts promoted this trend by entertaining an increasing number of masters and counsellors, as in the famous Chi-hsia Academy of Ch'i and a similar institution at the court of Wei.

The center of Lu, however, seems to have remained predominantly within the early Confucian tradition, concentrating on the cultivation of the ancient rites and music and the interpretation of classical lore. And yet, as we see from its development through such independent-minded masters as Mencius and Hsün Ch'ing, the Confucian school often remained in the forefront of ideas as it sought to defend its heritage against a radically different mentality that had sprung up around it. The term *Confucian school*, therefore, indicated from the beginning the twofold function of preserving and handing down the ancient traditions, and of reflecting on the meaning of these traditions in a changing world order. Although these functions were simultaneously carried out in actual practice, it was the first that ensured the continuity of the Confucian school, whereas the second placed it on a line with the other schools in offering solutions to problems centering around human life and the world order.

What were these ancient traditions preserved and propagated by Confucius and his school, and what was the specific contribution of the school which constituted a new departure and characterized it as a school in its own right? There were, first of all, the written traditions of the royal court of Chou: the sacrificial hymns of the *Book of songs* and the ceremonial libretti commemorating the great deeds of history in the *Book of documents*. In these ritual narratives we meet with ancient religious conceptions of a high god, Shang-ti, the Lord on High, presiding over the fate of man, especially of those called to put the world in order. This highest power is

2 *Chou-li* 1, p. 16a (Biot, *TL*, Vol. I, p. 33). See also *Chou-li* 4, p. 8a (Biot, *TL*, Vol. I, p. 297).

also often referred to as *t'ien* (heaven), and it takes precedence over all other gods who are honored with a cult. It chooses the sovereigns to bring civilization to the people and to instruct them in the correct human relationships. The rulers' charisma is sanctioned by the mandate they receive from Heaven, *t'ien-ming*, and it is by this sanction that they exercise their power and ensure a ritual order in the symbiosis of gods, ancestors, and men, in which each has his proper station.

Ritual, *li*, is the key word for a host of prescriptions for correct collective and individual behavior which were handed down from before Confucius's time, probably mostly in oral form, but which gave rise to extensive manuals of rules ranging from religious ceremonies to secular forms of etiquette required by court life. The oldest strata of the *I-ching* (Book of changes) likewise constitute a ritualized form of divinatory practice which ensured an orderly contact with the forces that governed the destiny of man.

A document more specifically connected with Confucius and his school was the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (Spring and autumn annals), a chronicle of the state of Lu from 722 to 481 B.C. This was the only document of the school that had no direct connection with the ancient "royal" tradition of Chou; indirectly, however, it was linked to the tradition of historiography, and from its use by the Confucians we know that the leading ideas guiding their judgments upon history were derived from the same traditions as appear in the other pre-Confucian sources.[3]

The special contribution of the Confucian school lies in its reflection on the meaning of the ancient ritual order and the place of man in this order, especially man entrusted with power. To this end, Confucius stressed the characteristics of what he called the *chün-tzu*, the ideal gentleman. The central quality of this *chün-tzu* he called *jen* (humaneness), from which derive all his other qualities. Because of this essential quality, the gentleman is able to conform to a strongly ritualized society from his own inner convictions. Because of this too, he is able to give the ancient religious dimension of *t'ien*, Heaven, its proper depth, for he knows that therein lies the ultimate sanction for all his words and deeds.

IDEALISTIC AND RATIONALIST ATTITUDES

As the Confucian school developed, it was forced by the changing mentality around it to work out some of the consequences of the *chün-tzu* philoso-

3 For the place of the *Spring and autumn annals* in historiography, see P. van der Loon, "The ancient Chinese chronicles and the growth of historical ideals," in *Historians of China and Japan*, ed. W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank (London, 1961), pp. 24–30.

phy. This is the most conspicuous aspect of the school, and much attention has been lavished upon it by Western scholars. The "idealistic" wing represented by Mencius (fourth century B.C.), and the "rationalist" one, attested in the writings of the school of Hsün Ch'ing (third century B.C.), are of interest because, each at a different period, they defend the original positions of the early school from which they stem. Mencius stresses the voluntary and prophetic aspects of man's sacred commitment to the ideals of humaneness and righteousness, thereby vehemently rejecting the utilitarian or naturalistic views being propounded in his day. Hsün Ch'ing is already much more utilitarian in his approach when he stresses man's commitment to a ritual order of society that is founded on his belief in a ritual order of nature. Both trends were to have a profound influence on the development of Chinese thought and social organization.

But these were not the only products of the early school founded by Confucius. Han Fei mentions the existence of eight different schools,[4] most of them doubtless concerned with handing down the classical lore which eventually was crystallized into the Confucian canon, and with the task of educating those called to high positions in the intricacies of ritualized society. Because of these indispensable functions, the class of the *ju*, traditional scholars, was probably far more numerous than were the representatives of the other, non-Confucian schools.[5]

TSOU YEN

Yet another intellectual trend must be noted here in connection with the development of the Confucian schools. This trend is known after its foremost scholar, Tsou Yen. Ssu-ma Ch'ien includes the biographical data for this scholar in the biographical chapter headed "Biographies of Mencius and Hsün Ch'ing." And it is even more curious to see that Tsou Yen and his theories are given relatively more space by the historian than the two others. Tsou Yen propounded, among other things, theories on the interaction of the two antithetical cosmic forces *yin* and *yang*, and he is to our knowledge the first great exponent of the idea that the vicissitudes of human history are determined by the successive domination of the so-called Five Phases (*wu-hsing*: sometimes translated misleadingly as Five Elements): wood, fire, metal, water, and earth, generated by the inner dynamism of *yin* and *yang*. Although Ssu-ma Ch'ien deems Tsou Yen's theories fantastic, he says:

4 Ch'en Ch'i-yu, ed., *Han-fei-tzu chi-shih* (Peking, 1958), p. 1080. See also John K. Shyrock, *The origin and development of the state cult of Confucius* (New York and London, 1932), p. 13 and note 23.
5 See Léon Vandermeersch, *La formation du légisme* (Paris, 1965), p. 18 note 1.

But essentially [his doctrines] always revert to humaneness and righteousness, to moderation and frugality, and to the relationship between ruler and minister, between high and low, and between the six familial relationships.[6]

Tsou Yen was one of many scholars who were counted as belonging to the class of *fang-shih*, experts on esoteric and magical arts. Yet the distinction between this class and that of the *ju* or Confucians cannot always be very precisely drawn, as we shall have occasion to see.

THE INTELLECTUAL POLICY OF THE CH'IN EMPIRE

With the conquest of the other states and the founding of the Ch'in empire (221 B.C.), the Confucians, and other groups, ran into serious trouble. This was to be expected in an authoritarian state that for its conception of order and stability was largely inspired by the theories of the Legalist school. Completely dedicated to the efficacy of statecraft and the enhancing of autocratic monarchy, this school vehemently attacked any political doctrine founded on other sources of authority. By carrying through the notorious edict of 213 B.C. ordering the burning of the books, the regime sought to destroy the main sources of the ancient tradition. Although the pernicious effects of this measure have no doubt been exaggerated by later generations, it remains a classic instance of totalitarian thought control.[7]

That the edict was not wholly effective is shown by the survival of certain texts. Copies of the proscribed writings – the *Book of songs*, *Book of documents*, the "Discourses of the hundred schools" (the philosophers), and the annals of the states other than the ruling Ch'in (most probably mainly the *Spring and autumn annals*) – remained untouched not only in the imperial archives, but also in the collections of writings of the seventy-two academicians (*po-shih*) who belonged to the emperor's entourage.

The name and institution of *po-shih* existed already during the period of the Warring States (fifth to third centuries B.C.), but no details about them are known. We can only surmise that they appeared with the emergence of the various academies already mentioned. The criterion for their selection under Ch'in, we are told, was that they must be "conversant with antiquity and the present day."[8] Under the First Emperor, these academicians must have acted as a type of learned counsellor to the emperor, and as representa-

6 *SC* 74, pp. 2344f. See also Ngo Van Xuyet, *Divination, magie et politique dans la Chine ancienne* (Paris, 1976), pp. 14–15.

7 For this incident and the suggestion that its effect was by no means as drastic as has been maintained, see Chapter 1 above, pp. 69f.

8 *Han shu* 19A, p. 726; Ch'ien Mu, *Liang Han ching-hsüeh chin-ku-wen p'ing-i* (Hong Kong, 1958), pp. 165f.

tives of the continuing academic tradition of former days. They probably included a large number of *fang-shih* or experts in esoteric arts. In any case, it is known that the emperor himself was deeply interested in securing supernatural sanction for his policies, as well as in a personal quest for longevity. Writings on divination and medicine were exempt from the notorious burning of the books, and many *fang-shih* chanced their luck at the imperial court.

The second notorious measure directed against critics of the First Emperor's regime is known as the burying alive of the *ju*. According to the *Shih-chi*, this measure was taken by the emperor when some *fang-shih* of the court spread criticisms of his increasing tyranny and thereupon fled. An examination took place of the scholars at the capital and, according to the records, the emperor himself selected around 460 among them who were then buried alive.[9] Nowhere in the text is the term *ju* actually used, and it is likely that all sorts of experts and scholars, including *fang-shih*, were among the victims. Yet the subsequent accusation against the First Emperor made it appear as if his cruelty had been directed exclusively against the Confucians.

Be that as it may, the criticisms that occasioned the burying of the scholars clearly included the complaint that under such an emperor no learned and capable scholar could safely practice his arts or frankly advise the sovereign. And we may well imagine that under the First Emperor no independent opinion was tolerated.

ATTENTION TO CONFUCIAN VALUES

As the first Han emperor consolidated his newly won power, neither he nor his court had much interest in scholarship of any kind. Kao-ti (r. 206–195 B.C.) is described as a notorious hater of scholars, whom he saw as nothing but pedantic parasites. It was all the more surprising, and a true presage of the future victory of the Confucian tradition, that in 200 B.C. the emperor let himself be persuaded by Shu-sun T'ung to arrange a well-ordered court ceremonial in the manner of the Chou kings Wen and Wu. Of more pragmatic significance was the edict of 196 B.C. regulating the recruitment of able persons for the government administration.[10]

This measure may have been due to the influence of another early Confu-

9 *SC* 6, p. 258 (Chavannes, *MH*, Vol. II, pp. 178–82). See also Derk Bodde, *China's first unifier: A study of the Ch'in dynasty as seen in the life of Li Ssu (280?–208 B.C.)* (Leiden, 1938; rpt. Hong Kong, 1967), p. 117; and Chapter 1 above, pp. 71f., 95f. for an appraisal of the effect of this measure.

10 *HS* 1B, p. 71 (Homer H. Dubs, *The History of the Former Han dynasty* [Baltimore, 1938–55], Vol. I, p. 130); Otto Franke, *Geschichte des chinesischen Reiches* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1930–52), Vol. I, pp. 274f.

cian, Lu Chia, whose courageous reply to the scornful emperor that an empire could be conquered but not administered on horseback must have greatly impressed him. He did not wish to return to the draconic Legalist system of Ch'in, but the alternative structure of traditional feudal administration was not conducive to building a strong empire. Although many of the emperor's former comrades in arms and associates were initially enfeoffed, there was no question that he preferred a centrally controlled state machinery, especially after his bitter experience with some of his former companions who later rebelled against him. The edict of 196 B.C. therefore was an important step toward the realization of an administrative government system staffed by men of merit, and it may be said to have been the first major impulse toward the famous examination system.

We may assume that what remained of the traditions of the Confucian school after their elimination under the Legalist Ch'in government received a new impulse through this edict. But it was not until the reign of Wu-ti (141–87 B.C.) that the Confucian tradition gained the upper hand. The only earlier measure in this direction that was of any significance took place under Hui-ti in 191 B.C., with the repeal of the Ch'in edict ordering the burning of the books. There is evidence that under his successors, Wen-ti (r. 180–157 B.C.) and Ching-ti (r. 157–141 B.C.), the institution of court academicians was continued, but these were not restricted to the Confucian tradition. In fact, the court seems to have favored the doctrines of Huang-Lao Taoism, by which we must understand a mixture of Taoist philosophical doctrines and of the various arts and precepts to attain longevity.[11]

TUNG CHUNG-SHU'S SYNCRETISM

In 140 B.C. the young Wu-ti succeeded to the throne. He was at first still very much under the tutelage of the empress dowager Tou, and therefore could not immediately carry out his own policies. Several times between 140 and 124 B.C., he convened his officials in order to hear their advice on good government and on remedies to cure the ills of the state.[12] More than a hundred candidates produced answers, but all were excelled by Tung Chung-shu, whose answers were to have a profound effect on the emperor's policies.

Tung Chung-shu was an academician specializing in the *Spring and au-*

11 See Chapter 12 above, pp. 694f.

12 See, e.g., *HS* 6, pp. 166f. (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 45f.). There must have been a series of such conferences, but their dates are uncertain. According to Ku Chieh-kang, *Han tai hsüeh-shu shih-lüeh* (Shanghai, undated [before 1949]), p. 70, they began in 140 B.C. According to others, only one such convention was held, in 136 B.C.: see Shyrock, *State cult*, pp. 29f. This date for the first of such conferences seems more likely, as at the time Wu-ti was only twenty years of age.

tumn annals according to the transmission by a scholar named Kung-yang Kao. Tung claimed that his theories all derived from the principles he had discovered in this classic. Much of what he said was conventional: the tools of *tao*, the correct Way, are *jen* (humaneness), *i* (righteousness), *li* (sense of propriety), and *yüeh* (music, to be understood in the sense of harmony). The ancients attained lasting peace through *li* and *yüeh* and through education. Like Confucius, Tung Chung-shu gave precedence to education over punishment, but he also combined the two, and here we see another element entering into his argument.

The *tao* of Heaven operates through the two primal forces *yin* and *yang*. *Yang* is associated with the spring; it symbolizes the giving of life. To it corresponds the spreading of virtue, and also education. *Yin* completes *yang*; it is associated with autumn, the season of destruction, and therefore symbolizes death and punishment.[13] Here we see the principle of change introduced as a principle which is operative in nature and should therefore be followed in government. Change is necessary not because Heaven, the origin of all things, is changing, but because circumstances change and therefore the application of the *tao* must vary accordingly. Thus, change and permanence are welded together into a universal system which combines natural and moral science.

As can be seen in other theories of Tung Chung-shu, the influence of the doctrines of Tsou Yen is unmistakable, and the teachings of *yin* and *yang* and the Five Phases undergo an elaboration which is to remain characteristic not only for the Han period, but also for the whole of Chinese tradition. We may certainly speak here of a syncretism between the traditions handed down by the early Confucians and the universalistic theories that had been developed after the beginnings of the Confucian school. It was not the mere moralism of this school that proved its relevance for the time, but the fact that it promoted a universalistic, holistic world view providing inescapable sanctions for the deeds of men and the ordering of society, and a place in the cosmos for the imperial system.

THE FIVE CLASSICS

Tung Chung-shu's claim to have derived his ideas from the *Spring and autumn annals* gives a clue to our understanding of his famous advice to the emperor: that "all that is not in the 'six arts' and the methods of Confucius should be cut off and not be allowed to be promoted simultaneously," and that "depraved theories should be exterminated and stopped, for only then

13 *HS* 56, p. 2502.

the universal norms can be unified and the standards become clear, and the people will know what to follow."[14] Here we have a confession of adherence to the old pre-Confucian royal tradition of Chou, for the six arts, as we have seen, are synonymous with the six categories of traditional literature (*Songs*, *Documents*, *Rites*, *Music*, *Changes*, and the *Spring and autumn annals*) preserved and handed down in the Confucian school.[15] But Tung Chung-shu's loyalty to this school and its ethical principles went hand in hand with his naturalistic interpretation of the ancient traditions. While taking over Confucius's moral principles, Tung went further in laying the foundations of Confucian metaphysics, thus becoming, so to speak, the first Confucian "theologian."[16]

The *Spring and autumn annals* constituted the meeting point par excellence between ethics and metaphysics. Already Mencius had expressed the belief that Confucius in editing this chronicle had applied the heavenly norms governing all creation to the process of human history.[17] With Tung Chung-shu, Confucius gains the dimensions of the sage at the center of history, the *su-wang*, the "king incognito," who in a subtle and hidden way formulates the praise and blame of human deeds proceeding from these eternal norms. The combination of ethics and metaphysics had its relevance in their quality of prophetic judgment, which must have impressed the rulers of those days.

The question of why Wu-ti favored Tung Chung-shu's proposals, and thus decided to promote the traditions handed down by the Confucians, is a complex one. First, there was already the tradition of court ceremonies, as we have seen, and there were also other forms of ritual which Shu-sun T'ung and other Confucians had introduced at the court, in particular religious ceremonies. But it was under Wu-ti that the main rituals harking back to the founders of Chou were reinstated. Closely connected with religious ritual and court etiquette was the realm of administration. In this field, too, the Confucians had a long-standing tradition, and it was only natural that in the course of time they would again play a leading role in promoting the early Chou institutions as handed down by their school.

But in both fields of ritual and administration they were above all valued as preservers and transmitters of the ancient royal traditions, not as representatives of one among various schools. This fact may also be seen from the famous catalogue of the Han imperial library as recorded in the Han

14 *HS* 56, p. 2523 (a somewhat different translation is found in Shyrock, *State cult*, p. 59). The six arts is here used in a different sense than in the *Chou-li*, as quoted in note 1 above.

15 *HS* 30, p. 1723; *HS* 88, pp. 2589f.

16 See Tjan Tjoe Som, trans. *Po hu t'ung*: *The comprehensive discussions in the White Tiger Hall* (Leiden, 1949, 1952), Vol. I, p. 98.

17 See van der Loon, "The ancient Chinese chronicles and the growth of historical ideals," pp. 26f.

dynastic history. The six arts – the classical traditions from the time before the rise of the various schools – head the catalogue as a separate category. Only after this comes the category of the "schools," of which the Confucian school is the first.[18]

Then there was another more practical problem with which Wu-ti was confronted, that of recruiting officials. His convening over a hundred of them to advise him on the fundamentals of good government already pointed toward his attempt to solve this problem. Under the influence of Tung Chung-shu, however, he went further. In 136 B.C. he changed the system of the officially appointed academicians, establishing chairs only for the five main classical traditions (*Changes*, *Songs*, *Documents*, *Ritual*, and *Spring and autumn annals*). There may well have been more than one academician for each category, but even so they were far fewer than the traditional seventy-two. Then, in 124 B.C., also at the instigation of Tung Chung-shu, the emperor founded the T'ai-hsüeh, an imperial academy in which regular groups of fifty pupils were to be trained by the academicians.[19] At the end of their study they were given an examination, probably to be written in much the same style as the memorials presented to the throne giving general advice on state matters. These measures constituted the beginning of the famous examination system that was for such a long time to be the means of recruitment for the higher echelons of the civil service.

THE GROWTH OF THE SCHOOLS AND OFFICIAL SCHOLARSHIP

With the official curriculum henceforth restricted to the Five Classics, the attention of many ambitious scholars concentrated increasingly on these texts. And now began another chapter in the history of the Confucian schools: the gradual establishment of various different interpretative traditions for each of the classics. This is the proper significance of the term Confucian schools in Han times. They ought more accurately to be named schools of classical studies.

For the *Book of songs* there existed already the parallel traditions of Ch'i, Lu, and Hann,[20] corresponding to earlier regional centers of learning. These traditions had, moreover, already won recognition at the court before Wu-ti, and academicians had been appointed to expound them. The differences between the three cannot have been more than slight textual variants

18 *HS* 30, pp. 1703–15.
19 *HS* 6, pp. 159, 171–72 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, pp. 32, 54); *HS* 19A, p. 726; *HS* 88, p. 3620. For the growth of the Academy, see Chapter 15 below, p. 769.
20 For "Hann," see Chapter 1 above, p. 44 note 37.

and different exegetical glosses.[21] For the other classics there were as yet no different school traditions, but this situation was soon to change. Under Hsüan-ti (r. 74–49 B.C.), eight additional schools were officially recognized, and under P'ing-ti (r. 1 B.C.–A.D. 6), the total number of schools and their official representatives at the imperial academy was increased to twenty-one.

The first school to be added was the so-called Ku-liang tradition of the *Spring and autumn annals*. This involved a controversy with the rival Kung-yang tradition for which Tung Chung-shu had been the first official expert. The controversy was the occasion of a discussion held under the auspices of Hsüan-ti with the aim of determining the official interpretations of all the classics. These were the so-called Shih-ch'ü discussions, the discussions in the Pavilion of the Stone Canal, held in 51 B.C. in a pavilion of that name in the palace. The participants, representing the various existing schools, probably numbered twenty-three.[22] The result was an increase in the number of academicians. Not only was there a gradual increase of teachers in the academy, but the number of students grew from the original fifty under Wu-ti to three thousand in 8 B.C. and even to thirty thousand during the reign of Shun-ti (A.D. 125–144) of Later Han.[23] As Pan Ku remarks, "This was no doubt due to the fact that it was a road towards emolument and gain."[24]

Interpretative comment

The various interpretations transmitted from before the Han period had already shown up differences that may well have been connected with different regional traditions, notably those of Ch'i and Lu. When the Five Classics came to have their exalted position through the measures taken by Wu-ti, the representatives of the different traditions had to build up an interpretative system which would secure them official recognition and shield them from the attacks of rivals. This resulted in a new type of commentary to the classics called *chang-chü* (chapter and verse). Hitherto, the schools had handed down and preserved *chuan* (transmissions) and *hsün-ku* (instructive comments). But especially with the Shih-ch'ü discussions, the need to defend their own position forced the masters to construct extensive commentaries and go into the smallest textual detail.

The earliest indications of this *chang-chü* method can be found in the

21 *HS* 88, pp. 3593f.; James Robert Hightower, trans., *Han Shih Wai Chuan: Han Ying's illustrations of the didactic application of the* Classic of songs; *an annotated translation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), pp. 1f.
22 *HS* 36, p. 1929; *HS* 71, p. 3047; and *HS* 88, p. 3590f. See also Tjan, *Po hu t'ung*, Vol. I, pp. 91–93.
23 Tjan, *Po hu t'ung*, Vol. I, p. 88. 24 *HS* 88, p. 3620.

biography of Hsia-hou Chien, an academician and specialist on the *Book of documents*, who "adduced to each chapter and verse those learned writings of the scholars on the Five Classics that were in agreement with the *Book of documents*, committed them to writing and thus embellished his explanations." He was criticized for this by his teacher, Hsia-hou Sheng, who said that "what Hsia-hou Chien calls the chapter and verse method is characteristic of a petty-minded scholar and destroys the great Way."[25] In this way monster commentaries came to be produced, such as the one of twenty thousand words reported to have been written by somebody to the first sentence of the *Book of documents*.[26] Pan Ku's comments are characteristic:[27]

> The scholars of antiquity ploughed [themselves] to provide for their nourishment. In three years they mastered one classic, for they preserved the great lines in pondering over the text. Therefore they stored up great virtue in a short time of effort. In later generations, the transmission of the classics had branched out into different [traditions]. No longer do scholars of wide learning heed the dictum [of Confucius][28] that one should hear much but have reservations about doubtful issues. They apply themselves to hairsplitting arguments in order to escape criticism, and by glib words and ingenious explanations they destroy the substance of the texts. Their explanations of a five-word text run to twenty or thirty thousand words, to be rapidly superseded by others. Thus, one who in his youth adheres to one classic can only speak about it when his hair has turned gray. They are content with what they have learned, annihilate what they have not seen, and in the end becloud themselves. This is the bane of scholarship.

In trying to establish and maintain different school traditions in the classics, the scholars were concerned with two problems: that of correct textual transmission, and that of correct interpretation. We shall discuss the latter problem first. As we have already seen in the case of Tung Chung-shu, there came about a tendency to interpret the ancient texts in terms of a holistic world view which had been developed especially in the school of Tsou Yen. We may say with Ku Chieh-kang that the backbone of Han thought was the doctrine of *yin* and *yang* and the Five Phases.[29] This meant that the Five Classics came to be interpreted in an esoteric way that was intended to reveal their true meaning for all time. For the classics were not revered for their historical value; as their categorical name *ching* indicated, they were "canons . . . which provided the standards for man to arrange his life, for the ruler to govern his people."[30]

25 *HS* 75, p. 3159. See also the comments on this text by Ch'ien, *Liang Han ching-hsüeh*, pp. 201f.
26 See Ch'ien, *Liang Han ching-hsüeh*, p. 203.
27 *HS* 30, p. 1723 (Tjan, *Po hu t'ung*, Vol. I, pp. 143–44); Ch'ien, *Liang Han ching-hsüeh*, pp. 206–07.
28 For this allusion, see Arthur Waley, trans., *The Analects of Confucius* (London, 1938), p. 92.
29 See Ku, *Han-tai hsüeh-shu*, p. 1.
30 Compare Tjan, *Po hu t'ung*, Vol. I, p. 95.

This esoteric tendency was focused on the endeavor of what we may call "reading the signs of the times." Tung Chung-shu himself was a firm believer in this practice, which consisted of interpreting all kinds of curious deviations from nature. The holistic world view of man as embedded in a cosmic dynamism sought to determine the connection between natural phenomena and the deeds of man. It developed into a true science, interpreting and classifying any event or phenomenon that might possibly have a bearing on understanding the cosmic forces in their interaction with the human world. A striking example of this science has been preserved in the Treatise on the Five Elements ("Wu hsing chih," *HS* 27), which is a veritable handbook of portents.[31]

Ch'an-Wei literature

More curious still was the emergence of a type of literature mostly known by its generic name of *ch'an-wei*.[32] *Ch'an* was the name for oracles and predictions. *Wei* indicated a literature containing esoteric explanations of the *ching* or classics. *Ching* originally meant the warp of a loom, and *wei* meant its woof. In Western literature the *wei* are usually referred to as apocryphal books, though the analogy is somewhat remote.[33] When exactly these *ch'an-wei* first appeared is not precisely known. Ku Chieh-kang thinks that the *wei* texts to the various classics originated with the regime of Wang Mang (r. A.D. 9–23), because they are not recorded in the bibliographical chapter of the *Han shu*.[34] Others, however, believe them to have originated during Former Han in the first or possibly even in the second century B.C. It is certain, in any case, that elements of the beliefs which they express can be traced back to even earlier times.

The *ch'an-wei* literature has been preserved only in fragmentary quotations, for the texts began to be prohibited in the fifth century, and by the beginning of the seventh century, during the reign of Sui Yang-ti, they were virtually destroyed. Especially during the Later Han, however, they were greatly in vogue and enjoyed the interest of the imperial court. How exalted their onetime position was can be seen from a remark in the *Sui shu* to the effect that their composition was the work of Confucius himself because he feared that his teachings would not be understood by later generations.[35]

31 For the "Wu hsing chih," see Wolfram Eberhard, "Beiträge zur kosmologischen Spekulation der Chinesen der Han-Zeit," Vol. I. *Baessler Archiv*, 16 (1933), 1–100; Vol. II. *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Berlin, 1933), pp. 937–79.

32 For this subject, see Jack L. Dull, "A historical introduction to the apocryphal (*ch'an-wei*) texts of the Han dynasty," Diss. Univ. of Washington, 1966.

33 On this literature, see esp. Tjan, *Po hu t'ung*, pp. 100f.

34 Ku, *Han-tai hsüeh-shu*, p. 188.

35 *Sui shu* 32, p. 941.

Problems of authenticity and textual transmission

The other problem with which the various schools had to contend was that of the authenticity of the classical texts themselves, at a time when there was as yet no question of an "orthodox" version. At the beginning of Han, Confucian scholars had difficulty in recovering from the blow dealt by the regime of the First Emperor. The story of Master Fu or Fu-sheng, an academician under Ch'in, may be typical of the predicament of the scholars:[36]

When during the Ch'in the *Book of documents* was prohibited, Fu-sheng hid [his copy] in the wall of his house. During the fighting that followed he fled. When the Han had consolidated the empire, Fu-sheng sought for his copy of the *Documents*. Several tens of chapters having been lost, he recovered only twenty-nine chapters.

When Wen-ti (r. 180–157 B.C.) had a search made for specialists in the *Songs* and *Documents* and heard that Fu-sheng was already over ninety years of age, he sent a high dignitary, Ch'ao Ts'o, to study with him.[37] In this story the recovery of a text is mentioned side by side with its oral transmission. As written texts in those days must have been scarce, oral transmission probably played a much more important part in handing down the classical texts.

Gradually, however, the interest in recovering lost texts must have increased. Pan Ku reports how Hsien, king of Ho-chien, and An, king of Huai-nan, who lived during the time of Wu-ti (r. 141–87 B.C.), both collected ancient texts from among the people.[38] Then there is the story of Kung, king of Lu, who sometime after the death of Wu-ti started to demolish the house of Confucius with a view to enlarging his palace. As the workmen were tearing down a wall of the house, they suddenly hit upon a number of ancient texts apparently hidden there; and when the king went to look for himself, the music of drums, zithers, and bells was heard. The king took fright and ordered the demolition to be stopped.[39]

Some of these stories may have been made up later, for they were vital to the claims of some scholars that their texts were more authentic than those transmitted by the early Han masters. Thus the case of the "Book of documents (*Shang shu*) in ancient characters" which was purported to have been found in the wall of Confucius's house has become a *cause célèbre* in the history of classical studies. A descendant of Confucius, K'ung An-kuo (ca.

36 *HS* 88, p. 3603.
37 *HS* 30, p. 1706; *HS* 49, p. 2277; Ku, *Han-tai hsüeh-shu*, p. 92. At this time Ch'ao Ts'o was serving as one of the subordinate officials of the superintendent of ceremonial.
38 *HS* 53, p. 2410. 39 *HS* 30, p. 1706; *HS* 53, p. 2414.

156–ca. 74 B.C.), who was an academician for the *Book of documents*, is alleged to have obtained this text along with other ancient texts.[40] According to him, the ancient version contained sixteen additional chapters. He offered the ancient text version of the *Book of documents* to the throne, but owing to political circumstances it was not accepted into the official curriculum.

Toward the end of the Former Han dynasty, the text was again brought to the attention of the court by Liu Hsin (d. A.D. 23), the man who together with his father Liu Hsiang (79–8 B.C.) was responsible for cataloguing the imperial library. However, as early as the twelfth century, Chinese scholars showed that the version alleged to have been produced by K'ung An-kuo could not possibly have derived from him, and that it had been forged in the third or fourth century A.D.

Nevertheless, reports about the discovery of ancient classical texts must be seen in the light of the "scramble for chairs" which went on around the Academy and the much-coveted position of academician. The ancient text copy of the *Book of documents* was established in the official curriculum under P'ing-ti (r. 1 B.C.–A.D. 6), but abolished again under Kuang-wu-ti (r. A.D. 25–57), as a reaction against the reign of Wang Mang. We do not have to follow the vicissitudes of the text here, which in its final form may indeed have included forged chapters dating from a still later time (third century A.D.). Suffice it to say that the debate about its authenticity flared up again in the eighteenth century and reached a climax toward the end of the nineteenth century.[41]

More important for our purpose, the episode of Liu Hsin's activities in propagating this and other ancient texts was the beginning of a controversy among the schools of classical studies known as the controversy between ancient texts and new texts. The ancient text of the *Book of documents* was not the only issue at stake. The classical text in which Liu Hsin particularly had a hand was the *Tso-chuan* (Tso's commentary to the spring and autumn annals).

This famous chronicle was found by him in the imperial archives, and he "adduced the text of the commentary in order to explain the [spring and autumn] classic, [so that both texts] threw light on each other, and through this the meaning of each chapter and verse was perfectly elucidated."[42] In other words, Liu Hsin seems to have arranged the text he

40 *HS* 88, p. 3607.
41 The best classical study on this case still is the one by Paul Pelliot, "Le *Chou King* en caractères anciens et le *Chang Chou che wen*," *Mémoires concernant l'Asie Orientale*, Vol. II (Paris, 1916), 123–77. For a summary, see Bernhard Karlgren, *Philology and ancient China* (Oslo, 1926), pp. 95f.
42 *HS* 36, p. 1967.

found in such a way as to present it, not as an ancient text in its own right, but as a commentary to one of the sacred classics. In order to do so successfully, he may even have inserted fabrications of his own. Be that as it may, Liu Hsin ran into difficulties in presenting his ancient texts for inclusion in the official curriculum, and his angry memorial on this occasion is full of bitterness against the narrow-minded mentality of the scholars who would rather follow faulty oral transmissions than believe in authentic ancient texts.[43]

Wang Mang and Liu Hsin

When Wang Mang rose to power (reigning as emperor of the Hsin dynasty from A.D. 9–23), Liu Hsin's position changed dramatically. Both men had served in the palace together, and so between 7 B.C. and A.D. 9 Liu Hsin was promoted to high rank and office on the initiative of Wang Mang.[44] Liu Hsin then saw his chance and established the ancient texts in the curriculum taught at the Academy.[45] Wang Mang was so much steeped in the classical lore that with every step he took, he secured the sanction of one or another of the sacred texts. At the same time, his use of the classics reveals him to be as much a believer in mystic signs and portents as all the other officially recognized classical scholars. He was in all subsequent ages decried as a usurper until he found more sympathetic treatment in modern times.[46]

Wang Mang himself also discovered a lost classic, according to historical records. This was the *Chou-li* (Rites of Chou), also called *Chou-kuan*, the Officialdom of Chou. This text, later to be incorporated into the sacred canon, is an elaborate utopia describing an administrative system that probably never existed in this form. Probably it originated before Han,[47] but it certainly was a text that suited the overall aims of Wang Mang to the core – namely, the reconstruction of an idealized antiquity.

Official scholarship during Later Han

With the fall of Wang Mang, the pent-up reactions against him led at first to the abolition of all the ancient texts established during his time in

43 *HS* 36, pp. 1968f. See the partial translation by Tjan, *Po hu t'ung*, Vol. I, pp. 144–45.
44 *HS* 99B, p. 4100 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, p. 263). See also Ku, *Han-tai hsüeh-shu*, p. 152; and Ch'ien, *Liang Han ching-hsüeh*, pp. 55f. 45 Shyrock, *State cult*, p. 73.
46 For the traditional view and the assessment included in this volume, see Chapter 3 above, pp. 223f., 232f., 239.
47 For a vindication of the authenticity of the *Chou-li* and the *Tso-chuan*, see Bernhard Karlgren, "The early history of the *Chou li* and *Tso chuan* texts," *BMFEA*, 3 (1931), 1–59.

power. Yet this was not the end of the controversy between adherents of the new texts and those of the ancient texts. Nor was it the end of the contention for academic chairs. The new emperor, Kuang-wu-ti (r. A.D. 25–57), was himself a great believer in portents and in the literature that pertained to them. This meant that esoteric interpretations enjoyed greater prestige than ever. Scholars protesting against this trend ran into great danger, as in the case of Huan T'an, who memorialized against *ch'an-wei* mysticism and had to recant when challenged by the irate emperor.[48]

It has been suggested that this sceptical attitude in Huan T'an and others was characteristic of scholars adhering to the ancient texts, whereas those propagating the new texts were completely given to the *ch'an-wei* interpretation of the classics. This thesis cannot be maintained, because both Liu Hsin and Wang Mang, promoters of the ancient texts, were themselves believers in the esoteric interpretations. Rather, should we think of a division between those scholars who, often in pursuit of baser motives, inflated this esoteric pseudoscience with endless explanations, and those who rebelled against these excesses which they felt to be a pernicious trend in classical studies.[49] That they all adhered to the dominant holistic view of man and the world is beyond doubt, even in the case of such independent-minded scholars as Yang Hsiung (53 B.C.–A.D. 18) and Wang Ch'ung (27–ca. A.D. 100), both of whom were extremely critical of the official scholarship of their day.

The situation of classical studies during Later Han seemingly pointed to a victory of the adherents of the new texts over those of the ancient texts. The academic chairs were occupied by new text scholars, while adherents of the ancient texts could not get their schools established. Underneath this outward appearance of things, however, considerable tension must have been building up. Protests against the excesses of official scholarship increased, and this may have been the underlying cause for a second conference on the true meaning of the classics, which was held in A.D. 79.

This conference is known as the *Po-hu i tsou*, or "consultations in the White Tiger Hall." The *Po-hu t'ung*, purporting to be a report of these discussions, may actually be a summary of them written at a later date.[50] Its contents illustrate the dominant holistic world view characterized by a belief in the interaction between the cosmic forces and human deeds and events. The texts quoted range from the classics – new texts and ancient texts – to the *ch'an-wei* literature. Thus, the *Po-hu t'ung* may be regarded as

48 *Hou-Han shu* 28, pp. 959f.; Tjan, *Po hu t'ung*, Vol. I, pp. 151–52. For other examples see Tjan, ibid.; and Ch'ien, *Liang Han ching-hsüeh*, pp. 221f.

49 See the analysis of the problem by Tjan, *Po hu t'ung*, Vol. I, pp. 141–43.

50 See the translation and study of this text by Tjan Tjoe Som, *Po hu t'ung*.

an apotheosis of Han "theology" at a time when it had begun to wane. It was the last great monument of an official scholarship, closely bound up with the mystique of empire, which had been the characteristic link between metaphysics and politics during much of the Han period.

Perhaps the last official act of a Han government that concerned the classics was the order given for the inscription of the new text version on stone, in A.D. 175. The task was entrusted to Ts'ai Yung, and some of the tablets engraved at that time still survive. This act was not only of intrinsic value; it formed a precedent that was to be followed by other dynasties throughout imperial history.

Private schools

We can see the beginning of the trend away from the imperial Academy reflected in the subsequent emergence during Later Han of independent private schools of classical studies, the most famous of them being those of Ma Jung (79–166) and Cheng Hsüan (127–200). It was only natural that the ancient text classics which could not obtain recognition at court were increasingly cultivated in these private centers of learning. But the rift between official and private scholarship cannot be simply identified with the division into two camps between new text and ancient text scholars, nor with a division between esoteric and rationalist studies. In fact, the greatest of the Later Han scholars, Cheng Hsüan, whose commentaries were to play such a large role in subsequent classical studies, made free and abundant use of the *ch'an-wei* literature in them, thus striving to harmonize the various schools of interpretation.

It was rather the growing opposition to the narrow-minded bigotry of the new text academicians of the Academy, combined with the gradual decline of actual imperial power, that gradually drove serious classical scholarship away from the court. Although there is no indication that the private schools of Later Han were instrumental in developing a new metaphysic as an alternative to early Han cosmology, in the writings of such independent scholars as Yang Hsiung and Wang Ch'ung we find traces of a naturalist world view based on the early Taoist philosophers Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu which was to dominate the intellectual climate after Han.[51] The climate of independent classical studies certainly helped to pave the way for a more truly universalistic mystique. This was not so clearly linked to actual political power; rather, it provided the rationale for an independent judgment of this political power.

51 See Fung Yu-lan, *A history of Chinese philosophy*, trans. Derk Bodde (London and Princeton, 1952), Vol. II, pp. 137f., 150f.

This outline history of Confucian scholarship during both the Former and Later Han dynasties has tried to show that the reasons why the Confucian scholars were destined to play a decisive role in the formation of a Chinese state ideology and of the life style and guiding ideas of the upper classes were mainly two. In the first place, the Confucians were valued as the preservers and transmitters of earlier royal traditions, and not simply as representatives of one school of thought among others. Second, and this was of even greater importance, the driving force behind the development of the Confucian schools was the prophetic quality of a holistic interpretation of man and the universe in their mutual interaction. The ancient faith in Heaven as the prime mover of all things was elaborated by a protoscientific rationale and thus emerged as the first great metaphysical system in the history of the Confucian tradition. This significant fact meant, on the one hand, a new development in Confucianism; on the other hand, this development was in essence the continuation of a Confucian faith which had informed its moralistic tendencies from the beginning.

CHAPTER 15

CONFUCIAN, LEGALIST, AND TAOIST THOUGHT IN LATER HAN

Many thinkers in Later Han China were in a mood of disillusionment and bewilderment. They were dissatisfied with the social environment in which they found themselves; they considered the political, social, and economic practices of the time to be utterly corrupt. From their common Confucian background, these thinkers blamed the ruling regime for failing to curb the evil, and for failing to reform the affairs of the state; these were moral and political failings which they regarded as prime causes of other ills. Some of these thinkers went a step further and cast doubt on the prevailing Confucian doctrines, which for centuries had been the guiding principles of the state. Since these thinkers were nominal Confucians, their distress has been obscured by the so-called triumph of Confucianism in Han times, and by the highly conservative doctrine propagated by the Later Han court as the official Confucian orthodoxy.[1] The tension between the official Confucian teaching as established in Former Han and its nonofficial critique arising in the Later Han not only evinces the diversity and complexity of Han Confucianism; it also marks an important change in the general intellectual trend from Former Han to Later Han.

With the fall of Later Han, the official Confucian orthodoxy perished. Much later it was denounced by the neo-Confucians as well as by many modern scholars as a vulgar mixture of Confucianism, Taoism, Legalism, and yin-yang and Five Elements cosmological thought. On the other hand, the criticism of this orthodoxy by Later Han thinkers has often been praised as being truly representative of the Confucian moral spirit.[2] However, Han Confucian orthodoxy in its heyday had not only absorbed but also sustained elements of other schools of thought in its grand synthesis. Because Confucianism had become a conglomeration of various strains of thought it was possible for Han thinkers, nominally known as Confucians, to adopt positions different from the official orthodoxy or to criticize the Confucian

1 Chi-yun Chen, *Hsün Yüeh* (A.D. 148–209): *The life and reflections of an early medieval Confucian* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 10f.

2 Ku Yen-wu, *Jih-chih lu* (Wan-yu wen-k'u ed.) 5, pp. 39–40; Ku Chieh-kang, *Ch'in Han ti fang-shih yü ju-sheng* (Shanghai, 1955), pp. 1f.

synthesis. This led to an upsurge of neo-Taoism and neo-Legalism in Later Han thought. The history of Han Confucianism is, in a sense, a history of the development of the variegated cross-currents of Confucian, Legalist, and Taoist thought in Han times.

FORMER HAN AND WANG MANG: THE HERITAGE

The failure of the Confucian ideal

The triumph of Han Confucianism as a guiding principle of the state was a slow development. With the disastrous downfall of Ch'in, Legalism was discredited. The strong reaction against the political excesses of the Ch'in regime had implications not only for Legalist ideology, but also for those grandiloquent Confucian teachings that could be linked to Legalism through Hsün Ch'ing's thought. In the early years of Former Han, doubt was cast on the Confucian concept of a Mandate of Heaven which justified the possession of supreme political power by a dynastic regime. Under such circumstances it was Taoism, with its emphasis on non-action (*wu-wei*), that won the special favor of the early Former Han court. Politically, non-action meant that no unnecessary or impractical action should be taken by the government – the court should refrain from excessive interference in the operation of government at lower levels and in life in the local communities. In the economic and financial spheres, the court should practice strict frugality, which had been an important Mohist precept and was later adopted by the Han Confucians as a basic tenet.

In spite of rhe popular denunciarion of rhe Ch'in regime and its Legalism, the early Former Han court did very little to rid the realm of the Legalist teachings and practices it had inherited from the Ch'in. Following the Taoist precept of non-action, the court probably found it impractical to undertake another drastic reform and was content to let the lower levels of government be run according to established routine by officials who had survived from the Ch'in regime or who were trained in that routine. Due to the traumatic experience of the Ch'in downfall, these Legalist-trained officials and their theoretical exponents could no longer rely on Legalist theory, which had been repudiated by the Han state and generally discredited. Instead, they relied on their expertise in governmental affairs or practical statecraft (*li-shih*), which in Han times became virtually synonymous with a strain of neo-Legalism. The Taoist distrust of lofty moral ideals and emphasis on government doing only what was practical, together with the neo-Legalistic cultivation of administrative expertise, fostered a pragmatic orientation in early Former Han thought.

Even some of the Confucian thinkers in the early years of the Former Han were constrained by this pragmatic attitude. For example, when Lu Chia tried to lecture Kao-ti (r. 206–195 B.C.) on the Confucian *Shih* (Book of songs) and *Shu* (Book of documents), he was rebuffed by the emperor, who declared that he had won the empire "on horseback," i.e., by military and other coercive means, and had no use for lofty, impractical ideas from the Confucian classics. Lu Chia had to admit that the empire had been won "on horseback," but he warned the emperor that "it could not be ruled on horseback," and offered the tragic downfall of Ch'in as a lesson. He was subsequently commissioned to write twelve chapters of practical discussions on the reasons for the downfall of Ch'in and for the rise and fall of other ancient states in a book entitled *Hsin-yü* (New analects), in which he probably introduced some essentially Confucian ideas clothed in mundane terms.[3]

Another example was Chia I, an eminent Confucian in the reign of Wen-ti (r. 180–157 B.C.). In spite of his generally spirited condemnation of Ch'in Legalism, Chia I offered a highly pragmatic analysis of the reasons for the Ch'in downfall. In his fine essay entitled "Kuo Ch'in lun" (The faults of Ch'in),[4] he argued that the Ch'in dynasty might have survived the revolution if the Second Emperor had withdrawn his defeated army from the east to defend Ch'in's original territory in the "Region within the Passes" (Kuan-chung) and waited there for a propitious time to attack the rebels. This, Chia I pointed out, had been the successful strategy adopted by the First Emperor in his original conquest of the other warring states. Chia I maintained that the Second Emperor failed to adopt this stategy not because he was morally weak (for the strategy had nothing to do with morality), but because he was ignorant – ignorant not only in matters of morality, but also in matters of statecraft. Such ignorance was a result of the Legalist disdain for education. Chia I concluded that a proper education for the heir to the throne would have saved the Ch'in dynasty. He went on to suggest in his *Hsin-shu* (New book) that an adequate educational program for the offspring of the ruling house was essential for the survival and well-being of the Han dynasty. The argument was so effective that about 176 B.C. a precedent was established for appointing Confucian tutors to the imperial princes, ensuring that future Han emperors would be well educated. Thus, Wu-ti (r. 141–87 B.C.)

3 For Lu Chia and his relationship to Tung Chung-shu, see Chapter 12 above, pp. 709f.; and Chapter 13, pp. 731f.

4 For references to this essay, see Chapter 13 above, p. 732 note 19. For a somewhat different view of Chia I's motives, see Chapter 2 above, pp. 148f.

ascended the throne after receiving a good education from Confucian tutors.[5]

Under Wu-ti, Kung-sun Hung in 124 B.C. became the first Confucian scholar to rise from commoner status to the post of chancellor. In 136 B.C., it was decreed that the Five Classics were to be the orthodox program of study for the academicians (*po-shih*). In 124 B.C., a quota of official disciples (*ti-tzu*) and students (*ju ti-tzu*) was established.[6] These were to study the Confucian classics under the auspices of the court scholars, thus constituting an Imperial Academy (*T'ai-hsüeh*). After one year of study at the Academy, and upon passing an examination in one of the classics, a student would be appointed to a middle- or lower-level government post. Here we find the origin of the civil service examination system. The quota for official disciples was increased from fifty under Wu-ti, to one hundred under Chao-ti (r. 87–74), to two hundred under Hsüan-ti (r. 74–49), to one thousand under Yüan-ti (r. 49–33), to three thousand under Ch'eng-ti (r. 33–7). At the beginning of the Christian era, Wang Mang ordered the limit on the number of official students to be lifted altogether.[7] Furthermore, an increasing number of prominent Confucian scholars, especially those of the court, had the good fortune to be appointed tutors of the heir apparent. These men were promoted to high office when their student became emperor.

The pragmatic approach of the Han Confucians was extremely successful. By the time of Yüan-ti not only did the emperor have a thorough Confucian education, but most of the high officials as well came from the Confucian school, and numerous lesser Confucian students were placed in middle- and low-ranking government positions. Even local magnates, heads of powerful families and clans, big landlords, successful merchants, or local warlords of significant influence and popular appeal began to model themselves after the Confucians. In a sense, the Confucian triumph was complete.

With the success of the Confucian pragmatic approach, however, the sense of urgency was lost. From its dominant position Confucianism grew more varied, and its advocates became more ambitious and idealistic. The triumph of Han Confucianism, unlike the triumph of Ch'in Legalism, was accompanied not by an outright suppression of the other schools of

5 *Hsin-shu* 5 ("Pao fu"), pp. 3a et seq. For this book, see Chapter 2 above, p. 148 note 86. For the establishment of teachers for the heir apparent, see *Han shu* 19A, p. 733 (and annotation in *Han shu pu-chu* 19A, p. 18a). For Chia I's writings, see Chiang Jun-hsün, Ch'en Wei-liang and Ch'en Ping-liang, *Chia I yen-chiu* (Hong Kong, 1958).

6 *HS* 6, pp. 159, 172 (Homer H. Dubs, *The History of the Former Han dynasty* [Baltimore, 1938–55], Vol. II, pp. 32, 54).

7 For the large number of attendants at the Academy, see *Hou-Han shu* 67, p. 2186; *HHS* 79A, p. 2547. For the location of the Academy, see Hans Bielenstein, "Lo-yang in Later Han times," *BMFEA*, 48 (1976), 68f.

thought, but by a subtle promotion of learning and education that coincided with the basic Confucian concerns. The promotion was made on a broad but shallow basis politically, socially, and intellectually.

In 140 B.C., a decree was issued dismissing a select group of candidates for office who were adepts of the Legalist or eclectic teachings of Shen Pu-hai, Han Fei, Su Ch'in, and Chang I.[8] The effect of this decree was limited to the particular group it specified. This attempt of Wu-ti to promote Confucianism at the expense of other schools of thought was abandoned in 139 B.C. by the Taoist-inclined grand empress dowager, and Taoism continued to be favored by the court until 136 B.C., when the grand empress dowager died. Even within the group of gentlemen-scholars selected in 140 B.C., at least one, Yen Chu, who had a good knowledge of the "eclectic teachings of Su Ch'in," was not dismissed but was promoted to be a counsellor of the palace. He remained in high office until as late as 122 B.C.[9]

In addition, as stipulated by Kung-sun Hung, the qualification of those to be admitted to the Imperial Academy as disciples was merely that "they should be more than eighteen years of age and of good manner as well as proper deportment." And the requirement for those to be admitted as students was for those who:[10]

> in the various commanderies, kingdoms and counties, demonstrate a liking for literary learning, respect for their superiors and elders, solemn support for government orders and instructions, and make a contribution to harmonious local relationships, all of which are to be observed consistently in their deeds and words inside and outside the family.

To graduate from the Imperial Academy, a student was to have "attended . . . for one year, passing an examination in one of the Five Classics." Such a course of study was hardly adequate for thorough Confucian indoctrination. Many eminent Confucians in Han times who had been adherents of other schools of thought were converted through the official education system. After a nominal conversion, such men tended to continue to think and act in accordance with principles found in the philosophic systems to which they had originally given allegiance, expressing these in Confucian terms.[11]

Thus, eclectic strains of thought, originating from the late Warring States period and sustained by the pragmatic attitude of the early Former Han government, continued to develop under the nominal dominance of

8 *HS* 6, p. 156 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. II, p. 28). 9 For Yen Chu, see *HS* 64A, pp. 2775f.
10 *HS* 88, pp. 3593f.
11 Benjamin E. Wallacker, "Han Confucianism and Confucius in Han," in *Ancient China: Studies in early civilization*, ed. David T. Roy and Tsuen-hsuin Tsien (Hong Kong, 1978), pp. 215–228.

Confucianism. Many of the reform measures adopted by Wu-ti were of the eclectic Legalist strain, while many of the sacrificial and ceremonial rituals instituted by the same emperor were a mixture of Taoism, shamanistic magic, and yin-yang and Five Elements cosmology. Tung Chung-shu, a great Confucian thinker in the time of Wu-ti, was as much an advocate of yin-yang and Five Elements cosmology as he was a Legalist and Confucianist.

Out of this milieu there evolved a Confucian idealism based on the crucial Confucian concept of man. According to this concept, human beings are the central locus of the world. As constituents of the society and the state, their cause is the only valid basis for reform. They possess the sense mechanisms and mental faculties to know and to judge, and are the tangible agents in acquiring knowledge and cultivating morality, and hence the means of reform. Humanity is conceived of not so much in terms of a fixed "essence," but rather in terms of a creative "actualization" of its variable potentials. Human existence is not merely the enactment of a drama on a confined stage, devised, directed, and observed by divine providence; it is a sacrificial procession in which human actors intermingle with elements of nature and the divine.

Development of human potential varies in individuals. As in a sacrificial procession, harmonious action requires a sense of common participation in all its participants, but all participants do not share the same degree of insight into the complexity of the whole. Hierarchy is accepted, although some Confucian thinkers never relinquished their ideal that an ultimate equality (*t'ai-p'ing*) will be realized when the education process prevails and all human beings have developed their potential to the uttermost in an age of *t'ai-p'ing* (universal peace and ultimate equality). Before the arrival of the age of *t'ai-p'ing*, however, equality and justice must be maintained in a hierarchical order based not on birthright and inheritance, but on the intrinsic worth of each human being according to his accomplishment in the education process.[12]

In Former Han times this social, political, and ethical precept was provided with a metaphysical basis in the rational postulation of a will of Heaven and of a broadly conceived cosmos. According to this postulation, Heaven covers all and of necessity covers the human world; since human beings constitute the locus of the human world, which is an integral part of the greater universe or cosmos, they must be an important locus in the cosmos as well. Moreover, as Heaven represents justice, human justice must be in accordance with the justice of Heaven.[13] But how can human

12 Donald J. Munro, *The concept of man in early China* (Stanford, Calif., 1969), pp. viii and 15.
13 Ch'en Ch'i-yün, *Hsün Yüeh and the mind of late Han China: A translation of the* Shen-chien *with introduction and annotations* (Princeton, N.J., 1980), pp. 5–11.

beings in their mundane sphere be certain that their knowledge, action, and justice are in accordance with cosmic and heavenly principles? Hsün Ch'ing's concept of the coefficiency of the "good" and the "effective" become crucial at this juncture. According to Hsün Ch'ing, what is good for humanity contributes to the survival and continuous development of mankind and consequently sustains itself; what is bad for humanity threatens to destroy human culture and will destroy itself in that same process.

The survival of humanity and the cumulative development of culture in the past have validated this principle, which is independent of the human will and might be conceived of as a law of nature, a cosmic principle, or the justice of Heaven. As Heaven is all-powerful and all-efficient, the knowledge and action of human beings could not be effective and good if they were not in accordance with the justice of Heaven.

Thus the Confucian educational process, which affects the moral, political, and social elevation of individual human beings, is construed as being of cosmic significance in realizing the justice of Heaven. And when a man is selected by Heaven as the worthiest, and receives from Heaven the mandate to rule, he then is the complete expression of Heaven's justice in the world. This justice will prevail over all when mankind enters the age of *t'ai-p'ing*.

During Wu-ti's reign (141–87 B.C.), this Confucian idealism merely served as a general appeal for reform and as a justification for the varied pragmatic measures adopted by the emperor. By the time of Yüan-ti (r. 49–33 B.C.), however, this idealism had become ingrained in the thought of many prominent Confucians who were in a position to demand its realization. Idealism thus gradually overshadowed pragmatism in late Former Han Confucianism. This peculiar strain of Confucian idealism was directly responsible for the dissatisfaction, disillusionment, and bewilderment of many thinkers of Later Han.

The Confucians in the middle of the first century B.C. probably had good reason to believe that their doctrine had prevailed. The best educated persons and those elevated to the highest offices were Confucians; the emperor was a Confucian. But the society and the state were far from perfect, and the age of *t'ai-p'ing* was as remote as ever. The Confucians suspected that something must have gone wrong. From our modern viewpoint, a fundamental error may be found in the very Confucian ideal that education alone could change human nature and reform society and the state. Since such an awareness was contradictory to the basic Confucian assumption, the Han Confucian approach to the problem was circuitous.

According to the Han Confucian tenet, man's position in the world was determined by his intrinsic worth as developed by education; this was

interpreted as a moral and cosmic principle. Since the position of the emperor was at the apex of the political and social hierarchy, he should be chosen from the worthiest of men. However, his occupying the throne had nothing to do with the Confucian tenet concerning education, merit, and promotion; it was due simply to the right of birth and inheritance. The principle of dynastic rule therefore compromised the ultimate Confucian ideal.

The Confucian idealists suspected that the world was not yet in "great harmony" because the imperial family had not yet been thoroughly reformed or otherwise replaced according to the Mandate of Heaven. Already in the time of Hsüan-ti (r. 74–49 B.C.), Kai K'uan-jao had cited a Confucian tradition from the *I-ching* (Book of changes) openly advocating a change of dynasties by the Mandate of Heaven, saying:[14]

> The five emperors took all under Heaven as public office; the three kings took it as their family property. As family property, it was transmitted to the son; as public office, it ought to be transmitted to the worthiest. This is like the rotation of the four seasons. The one who has accomplished his work should relinquish his post. A person undeserving of the position should not occupy that position.

For thus suggesting that the Han emperor should abdicate the throne, Kai K'uan-jao was indicted for treason and committed suicide. The two subsequent rulers, Yüan-ti (r. 49–33 B.C.) and Ch'eng-ti (r. 33–7 B.C.), came under great pressure to reform the imperial family and to rectify their personal morality. The pressure became so great that in 5 B.C. an edict issued in the name of Ai-ti betokened a change in the imperial title and the reign title in an attempt to restore his house's mandate under a new term.[15] This occult manipulation was soon popularly denounced and aborted. The pressure continued to mount until Wang Mang, a Confucian-styled sage, took over the throne, ended the Former Han dynasty, and founded the Hsin (New) dynasty (A.D. 9–23). Wang Mang thus fulfilled the Confucian dream of a sage ascending the throne and replacing a failing dynasty. He went on to decree many grandiose but impractical reforms derived from the Confucian canons. The founding of Wang Mang's dynasty thus marked the climax of Han Confucian idealism.

Wang Mang's triumph turned out to be a great disaster. The impracticality of many of his reform programs and the strong opposition from many powerful and influential leaders, who ironically also called themselves Confucians, cost Wang Mang his life and brought an end to the Hsin dynasty in A.D. 23. The fact that the great Confucian reform was opposed and aborted

14 *HS* 77, p. 3247.
15 *HS* 11, p. 340 (Dubs, *HFHD*, Vol. III, pp. 29f.); *HS* 75, pp. 3192f. See Chapter 2 above, p. 222.

by those who called themselves Confucians indicates the meaninglessness of the Han Confucian label and the limitations of reform by education. It turned out that Confucian education, as propagated in Han times, not only failed to cultivate in its recipients a moral character as idealized by the classic Confucian masters, but even failed to inculcate in the so-called Confucians a common ideology. In spite of his Confucian education, a ruler might still be a cruel, legalistic, or a weak and incompetent ruler; an official might still be an oppressive or corrupt official; and a landlord could of course be as greedy as other landlords. Even worse, they could use their knowledge of Confucianism for an eloquent justification of their unworthy actions.

Yang Hsiung: mystery, mind, and human nature

The failure of Wang Mang evoked a critical and discriminating spirit in the thinkers of Later Han. Although many Later Han thinkers still cherished a moral ideal, they had grown mistrustful of the holistic postulations of the Former Han schools. They realized that the political process was different from the educational process; that political achievement was not simply a function of a man's personal cultivation; that good public order was not a mere externalization of inner moral virtue; and that the motivation for political and economic reform must rest on political and economic rather that on ethical grounds. The tensions within the Han Confucian synthesis led to a gradual breakdown of that grandiose holism, out of which the various elements, Taoistic or Legalistic, now reasserted themselves.

The writings of Yang Hsiung (53 B.C.–A.D. 18), an eminent thinker and scholar in Wang Mang's time, represent the culmination of Confucian idealism and optimism in Former Han, but also show an early sign of the disquiet and critical discernment that became more distinct in Later Han thought. The optimism of Yang Hsiung is evident in his *T'ai-hsüan ching* (Classic of the Great Mystery) and *Fa-yen* (Model sayings). He considered the former to be a completion of the most profound of the Five Classics, the *Book of changes*, and the latter a completion of Confucius's *Analects* which he called the greatest of Confucian commentaries.

The *Classic of the great mystery* was a systematic exposition of the Former Han Confucian postulation of an all-embracing unity, which Yang Hsiung named the "great mystery," and of the centrality of the human "locus" in the trinity of heaven, earth, and man. The work elaborates on the dialectical concepts of permanence and change, unity and diversity, and simplicity and multiplicity, which figure prominently in the *Tao-te ching*, *yin-yang* cosmology, and the *Book of changes*. Yang Hsiung devised new sets of categories, such as the spheric, from *chung* (centrality) to *chou* (circumfer-

ence); and the procedural, from *chung* (centering) to *ch'eng* (completing). To expound on the correlativity of human cognition and cosmic principles, he constructed a new system for reckoning the numerological mutations of the *yin-yang* linear symbols, which he believed would supplement the systems of hexagrams in the *Book of changes*.

According to Yang Hsiung, the mystery (*hsüan*) is formless, yet "it is invisibly present in the myriad beings and in the mutation of *yin* and *yang* that generates the essence (the ethereal *ch'i*) of the myriad beings," and "it is the way of Heaven, earth and man." What then is this great mystery? It might emerge from "nothingness," yet it must correlate with the "spiritual intelligence" (*shen-ming*) to become a defining principle, which creates the "classifying categories" that transcend time.[16]

The *yang* comprehends [or knows, *chih*] the *yang* but not the *yin*; the *yin* comprehends the *yin* but not the *yang*. Only the mystery comprehends both the *yin* and the *yang*.

Yang Hsiung elevated spiritual intelligence, the power of cognition that implied human intelligence, to be coefficient with the great mystery. In the *Model sayings*, the Confucian emphasis on man as the agent knowing and "realizing" the myriad things, including the agent himself who occupied the central position in the greater universe, was explicitly discussed and reaffirmed. According to Yang Hsiung:[17]

The spiritual mind [*shen-hsin*], elusive and free, is capable of comprehending and controlling . . . the myriad things and spaces. . . . The spirit [*shen*] is mind [*hsin*] which secretly penetrates Heaven and realizes Heaven, and which secretly penetrates earth and realizes earth. Heaven and earth as divine intelligence are intangible, but the mind secretly penetrating them still will comprehend them. How is it to man, and to the affairs and categories of man. . . . The human mind is divine! When man exercises it, it exists. But when man forsakes it, it perishes. He who is able to exercise it constantly will be none other than the sage.

Thus the way of the sage is one with Heaven. Without man, Heaven could not realize itself as a cause; without Heaven, man could not complete himself.[18] With the power of knowledge, a true Confucian is invincible under Heaven.[19]

A clear indication of the Later Han disillusionment with the Confucian idealistic view of human nature and reform was the increasing attention given to the concept of fate (*ming*). In his further discourses in the *Model sayings* on human nature, mind, human affairs, the Confucian teacher,

16 *T'ai-hsüan ching* 6, pp. 6a et seq.
17 *Fa-yen (Han Wei ts'ung-shu* ed.) 4, p. 1a.
18 *Fa-yen* 7, pp. 2b–3a. 19 *Fa-yen* 5, p. 6a.

learning, and careers, Yang Hsiung became soberly realistic and more pessimistic. He believed that fate is determined by Heaven. But he did not explicitly say that human effort could be of no avail over fate; rather, he restricted the meaning of fate to that with which man has nothing to do. He wrote:[20]

For example, if one [chooses] to stand beneath a perilous wall where a slight movement might result in disaster, and if one thus behaves so as to invite his own death, is this fate?

Human intelligence might thus extricate man from numerous difficulties of a type that would otherwise incorrectly be attributed to fate. According to this view, it is intelligence rather than moral virtue that is crucial to successful human effort vis-à-vis fate.[21] This concept sustains the Confucian belief in the potential development of an ideal humanity, but mitigates the excessive demand and consequent disillusionment arising from the idealistic view of human goodness as a moral essence.

Compromising between the extreme views of human nature as either being all good (the Mencian thesis) or being all bad (Hsün Ch'ing's thesis), Yang Hsiung considered human nature as morally indeterminate.[22] "Human nature," he wrote, "is a mixture of good and bad; those who cultivate the good become good men; those who cultivate the bad become bad men." Intelligence, cultivated by learning, is the determinant. To Yang Hsiung, the principle of *li* (ritual propriety) and *i* (righteousness and justice) were less important when compared with intelligence. He wrote:[23]

For all under Heaven, there are three gates: those following their emotions and desires [*ch'ing-yü*] enter the gate of the birds [*ch'in*]; those following [the principles of] *li* and *i* enter the gate of men; those following the unique intelligence [*tu-chih*] enter the gate of the sage.

Since all philosophical schools partake of the exercise of human intelligence, Yang Hsiung conceded the relative value of their teachings. He argued that it is not necessary for one to follow a morally straight way (*tao*):[24]

Although a path is crooked, if it leads to the land of civilization [Chu-Hsia], it may be followed. Although a stream is winding, if it leads to the sea, it may be followed. Although an event is "crooked," if it leads us to the sages, it may be followed.

He went so far as to admit that, although the deceitful intrigues and plots devised by military experts or adepts of practical statecraft were evil,

20 *Fa-yen* 5, p. 2b. 21 *Fa-yen* 5, p. 2a. 22 *Fa-yen* 2, p. 3b.
23 *Fa-yen* 2, p. 6a. 24 *Fa-yen* 3, p. 1a, b.

these might be put to good use by the sage.[25] He also admitted that some of the Confucian classics were based on corrupt texts and were of inferior intelligence, and that some of the Confucian teachers were ignorant.

Yang Hsiung contended that it would be relatively easy to distinguish superior from inferior intellect, but it was extremely difficult to distinguish the great sage from the great impostor (*ta-ning*), because both might be of superior intelligence.[26] Yang Hsiung therefore upheld the example of the true sage and the model of a true master—a typical Confucian thesis. But he also considered law (*fa*) to be crucial in the human world. He championed the sanctity of law as the model regulations of the sage-rulers of antiquity. The model law "was initiated by Fu Hsi, completed by Yao, elaborated by Shun, as well as by the Chou dynasty"; it was not the creation of the Legalists.[27]

He condemned the statecraft methods (*shu*) developed by Shen Pu-hai and Han Fei as inhuman. But he granted that the teaching of the Legalists concerning law, and the teaching of the Taoist Chuang-tzu concerning the Way, insofar as they do not discriminate against the Confucian sage or overwhelm Confucian values, might be as valuable as those of the lesser Confucians.[28] The shortcoming of these other schools, Yang Hsiung held, lay in their narrow-mindedness and one-sided intelligence. According to Yang Hsiung, illustrious intelligence enlightens a myriad of directions. Since there are countless little things in the world, mere knowledge or expertise in one of these does not qualify one to be a true master. What should be prized in a true master is his possession or awareness of great intelligence (*ta-chih*).[29]

Huan T'an: a call for realism

Another outstanding thinker who lived during the transition period between Former and Later Han was Huan T'an (43 B.C.–A.D. 28). Both Yang Hsiung and Huan T'an were versatile Confucian scholars of the unorthodox Old Text School (*ku-wen hsüeh*).[30] Huan T'an was an admirer of Yang Hsiung and considered him to be a contemporary sage. Natural death spared Yang Hsiung from the tragic experience of the downfall of Wang Mang's regime; Huan T'an outlived Wang Mang's dynasty and witnessed the rise of the highly conservative Later Han regime, with which he found himself out of sympathy. In contrast to Yang Hsiung's moderately idealistic inclination, Huan T'an's attitude was far more pragmatic and realistic.

25 *Fa-yen* 3, pp. 3a–4a. 26 *Fa-yen* 4, p. 4a; *Fa-yen* 5, p. 1a.
27 *Fa-yen* 3, pp. 2a et seq. 28 *Fa-yen* 3, pp. 3b–4a. 29 *Fa-yen* 5, p. 1a.
30 *Ch'üan Hou-Han wen* 15, p. 8a.

Unfortunately, only fragments of his writings, entitled the *Hsin-lun* (New discussions) survive.[31]

Sustaining Yang Hsiung's view of human nature as morally indeterminate, Huan T'an thought that man has eyes and ears to see and hear, mental faculties to perceive and know, feelings of likes and dislikes, and inclinations to approach benefit and avoid harm. These are the same for all men; the difference lies:[32]

> in their ability which might be great or little, in their intelligent discernment which might be deep or shallow, in their intuition or intellect which might be unenlightened or enlightened, or in their character and conduct which might be cultivated to a greater or lesser extent; all of these vary in degree.

Only those possessing great ability and deep intelligence (discernment) can comprehend the whole truth. While Yang Hsiung emphasized only intelligence, Huan T'an balanced intelligence against ability, contending that the importance of the latter is such that:[33]

> if a sage is born again in the later age, we can only recognize that his ability excels ours, but we will be at a loss to know whether he is a sage or not.

Huan T'an went much further than Yang Hsiung in criticizing contemporary Confucian scholars, whom he considered to be unenlightened. They were not in possession of the way of the true master, and they were becoming more and more confused.[34] Citing the statement in the *Analects* that even Confucius had found it difficult to discuss the Way of Heaven, human nature, or fate,[35] Huan T'an criticized those scholars who failed to observe the more tangible affairs of men while prizing what was intangible and remote – namely, the way of the ancient sages. He pointed out that although institutions of Confucian scholarship had grown greatly in size and importance during the reign of Wu-ti (141–87 B.C.), government practices had at the same time become very bad.[36] This criticism struck at the heart of Former Han Confucian assumptions of a congruence between learning and political well-being, or of a grand unity of the sociopolitical, moral, and cosmic orders.

Huan T'an's pragmatic stance came close to that of the Legalist when he suggested that government policy should be changed according to the needs of different times and could not be based on one fixed doctrine (such

31 For Huan T'an and the surviving fragments of his writings, see *Ch'üan Hou-Han wen* 12, pp. 7b et seq., and 13–15; and Timoteus Pokora, *Hsin-lun (New treatise) and other writings by Huan T'an (43 B.C.–28 A.D.)* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1975). 32 Pokora, *Hsin-lun*, p. 25.

33 Cited in *Lun-heng* 16 ("Chiang jui"), p. 720 (Alfred Forke, *Lun-heng*, [Shanghai, London, Leipzig 1907–11], Part I, p. 361); Pokora, *Hsin-lun*, p. 19.

34 *CHHW* 14, p. 8a. 35 See Pokora, *Hsin-lun*, p. 239. 36 *CHHW* 14, pp. 10a–11a.

as Confucianism).[37] He argued that in peaceful times men learned in the moral way should be exalted, but that in difficult times men in armor should be honored.[38] He further claimed that there is no qualitative difference between the Confucian ideal government of the sage-rulers (*wang tao*) and the successful administrations of the temporally minded hegemon (*pa-kung*). He wrote:[39]

The five hegemons [*pa*] used their expedient authority and practical wisdom [*ch'üan-chih*]. . . . They raised a multitude of soldiers and contracted alliances and covenants so as to control the realm by strong measures, and were called "hegemons." . . . The way of the sage-rulers [*wang*] and the way of the strong hegemons were the two prospering principles [respectively] of ancient and more recent times. . . . The greatest merits of the hegemons were elevating the ruler and humbling ministers and subjects; establishing unitary authority and an administrative system, thus avoiding conflict in power and policies; rewarding and punishing in good faith and without exception, making law codes and government orders clear and exact; edifying and rectifying the hundred officials; and making the influence and the orders [of the ruler] all-prevailing. This is the method [*shu*] of the hegemon.

The sage-king was pure and his virtue was thus; the hegemon variegated his way and his merit was thus. They both possessed the realm, ruled the myriad people, and passed the reign to their descendants. Their substance is the same.

This would be the most explicit advocacy of Legalism by a Han Confucian.

LATER HAN

Su Ching, Pan Piao, and Pan Ku on the right to rule

Other Confucian scholars in the early years of Later Han, also dissatisfied with the broad Confucianist vision, tended to become more conservative. Su Ching, who had been the dean of the Confucian scholars at the court of P'ing-ti (r. 1 B.C.–A.D. 6) and remained in high office during the early years of the Later Han, testified that many Confucians of his time were confounded by the political upheavals surrounding the change of dynasties and doubted the validity of the Confucian concept of the Mandate of Heaven.[40] Su Ching felt the need to appeal to a Will of Heaven, inaccessible to human intelligence, to justify continued rule by the Han house. The new thesis that the founding of a dynasty was preordained by Heaven, whose divine sanction was beyond the understanding of man, and whose blessing could not be cultivated by mundane efforts, was elaborated by Pan Piao (A.D. 3–54) in his essay "Wang-ming lun" (On the destiny of kings)

37 *CHHW* 13, p. 3a; *CHHW* 14, p. 9b. 38 *CHHW* 12, p. 9a.
39 *CHHW* 13, p. 2b (Pokora, *Hsin-lun*, pp. 5–6). 40 *HHS* 30A, p. 1043.

and propagated by the Later Han court in its promotion of *ch'an-wei* apocrypha.[41]

Pan Piao's son, Pan Ku (32–92) reaffirmed this thesis and further condemned the freedom with which early Han thinkers had criticized the ruling dynasty. In a memorial of 25 November 74, Pan Ku specifically denounced Chia I's pragmatic discourse, "The faults of Ch'in";[42] he also considered as disloyal and improper Ssu-ma Ch'ien's own critical comments on the Han dynasty, but praised as a model of loyalty the poet Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju (d. 117 B.C.), who had eulogized and flattered Wu-ti in rhymed prose and had supported the court's extravagant *feng-shan* ceremonies.[43] The *Han shu* of Pan Ku and others was written according to a more strictly didactic principle than the *Shih-chi* had been and hence was, on the one hand, less critical of Confucian traditions, and on the other, less tolerant of non-Confucian deeds and words.[44]

In Pan Ku's writings, hereditary rights and family morality, especially filial piety (*hsiao*) and ancestor worship, were exalted in a manner that had not been common among Confucians of Former Han, but that became characteristic of the conservative Later Han Confucians. According to Pan Ku, the position of a ruler is sacrosanct regardless of his possession or lack of any personal virtue; he had inherited the right to rule from the founding ancestor of his house, who had received from Heaven a mandate to establish the dynasty. The wisdom of the sage is likewise superlative because it is endowed by Heaven at birth, rather than being the product of one's personal efforts.[45] Instead of dreaming of the glory of remote antiquity, Pan Ku advised, scholars should be more appreciative of the accomplishments of the present dynasty, which he considered to have excelled any past dynasty. This thesis was closer to the teaching of the Legalist Han Fei than to that of the Confucians.[46]

Wang Ch'ung: fate and human morality

The concept of fate or mandate (*ming*), advanced by Su Ching, Pan Piao, and Pan Ku, was greatly extended by Wang Ch'ung (27–ca. 100) in his

41 For Pan Piao, see Chapter 13 above, pp. 735f.

42 *CHHW* 25, pp. 66 et seq. See also Chapter 13 above, p. 732, and pp. 767f. above.

43 *CHHW* 26, p. 6a. For Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, see Yves Hervouet, *Un poète de cour sous les Han: Sseu-ma Siang-jou* (Paris, 1964), pp. 198f.; and Yves Hervouet, *Le chapitre 117 du Che-ki* (*Biographie de Sseu-ma Siang-jou*); *traduction avec notes* (Paris, 1972).

44 *CHHW* 23, pp. 10a–11a.

45 *CHHW* 23, pp. 8b–10a; *CHHW* 26, pp. 1a, 3b, 6a–8a. Pan Ku, *Po-hu t'ung-i*, 1A ("Chueh"), 1a et seq.; 1A ("Hao"), 9b et seq.; 3A ("Sheng jen"), 18a–20a [Tjan Tjoe Som, trans., *Po hu t'ung: The comprehensive discussions in the White Tiger Hall* (Leiden, 1949, 1952), Vol. II, pp. 528f.]; and 4A ("Wu ching"), 7b et seq.

46 *CHHW* 24, pp. 2a, 4a, 6a–8b, 9b; *CHHW* 25, pp. 2b, 4a et seq., 6b–7a.

Lun-heng, which shattered the Confucian postulation of a unified social-political, moral, and cosmic order. According to Wang Ch'ung, while the life of a human being may seem to be a coherent whole, it is in fact devolved on three different planes: biological, sociopolitical, and moral. The biological plane might be further divided into two, physical and mental. The nature of and the course of events within each of these spheres is independently determined. Thus a person might be healthy, but stupid, unsuccessful, and immoral. And a person of good moral character might not be healthy or intelligent and might not be successful in his social and political life. This contradicted the idealistic Confucian assumption that moral cultivation would produce a healthy, harmonious (hence happy), wise and able (hence successful) human being, and that when such cultivation and education prevailed, the state, the society, and humanity as a whole would exist in a state of great harmony, which would in turn effect a cosmic harmony.

Wang Ch'ung argued that fate or destiny as it unfolded in an individual's physical life (health and longevity) and his sociopolitical life (successful or unsuccessful) was determined by three different factors: personal (inborn, *hsing*), interpersonal (chance meeting, *feng-yü* or *tsao-yü*), and transpersonal (time, *shih*; or common fate, *ta-yün*). Biologically, an individual might have the good fortune to be innately healthy and intelligent (the personal determinant), and should live a long life. But if he had the misfortune to encounter a violent person who killed him, his life span would be shorter than that of the one who was innately less healthy, but who did not have such ill fortune. Furthermore, thousands of individual lives, healthy or unhealthy, wise or stupid, good or bad, might be terminated by one great disaster, such as earthquake, civil war, or epidemic; thus all would suffer a common fate (the transpersonal determinant of the nature of a period of time, or *ta-yün*). On the sociopolitical plane, an individual might be intelligent, able, and good; if such a person chanced to meet a master who was also intelligent, able, and good, he would be successful; but if he met a master who had no such personal qualities, he would have no chance of being successful.[47]

Whatever the nature of an individual's chance encounters, in hard times everyone, refined or rough, would be treated harshly; and conversely, in times of refinement, everyone would be treated in a refined way. Thus, even if a sage-ruler had the chance of being served by worthy ministers, their success could be undermined by great calamities (*ta-yün*) that are

47 *LH* 1 ("Feng-yü"), pp. 1f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. II, pp. 30f.); ("Lei-hai"), pp. 9f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. II, pp. 37f.); ("Ming-lu"), pp. 18f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 144f.); ("Ch'i-shou"), pp. 26f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. II, pp. 313f.). *LH* 2 ("Hsing-ou"), pp. 35f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 151f.); ("Ming-i"), pp. 41f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 136f.).

beyond human control. The more planes or subcategories Wang Ch'ung discussed, the more he saw the human world in terms of interacting fragments. In such a world, the best that men might accomplish would be a temporary order, based on an accidental compatibility among the fragmented parts, rather than a transcendent harmony ordained by the unitary Will of Heaven.

Wang Ch'ung reaffirmed the pragmatic principle that it is easier to understand and to learn from tangible human affairs and events than to discuss the elusive way (*tao*) or reason (*li*).[48] On the basis of common sense, he criticized many Han Confucian theories on the interpenetration of the human (biological, sociopolitical, and moral) and the natural (Heaven, cosmic) spheres as being false. He cast doubt on many statements in the Confucian classics about the ancient sage-rulers and even held some of the sayings attributed to Confucius and Mencius to be untenable. He upheld Pan Ku's idea that the Han dynasty, imperfect as it was, might be the most glorious of all dynasties ever to have existed. This glorification of Han, in a sense, affirmed the positive value of many of the earthly, pragmatic, or Legalistic programs and doctrines adopted by the Han rulers with the connivance of the Confucians.[49]

Ironically, in discrediting much contemporary Confucian doctrine, Wang Ch'ung contributed to the salvaging of the Confucian moral ideal by disentangling it from the superstitious and ideological encumbrances that had grown up around it. Although he suggests that it is predominantly extrinsic factors which determine the fate of a man on the various planes in which he moves, a unique exception is made for an individual's moral life, which Wang Ch'ung claimed was not thus other-determined. According to Wang Ch'ung, a morally good person might be unhealthy, short-lived and unsuccessful in the world, but these are failings only on the biological and sociopolitical planes, and as the course of events on these planes is determined by factors over which a man has no control, they are less significant

48 *LH* 2 ("Chi-yen"), pp. 77f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 173f.).

49 *LH* 4 ("Shu-hsü"), pp. 157f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. II, pp. 240f.); ("Pien-hsü"), pp. 191f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. II, pp. 152f.); *LH* 5 ("I-hsü"), pp. 203f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. II, pp. 161f.); ("Kan-hsü"), pp. 216f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. II, pp. 171f.); *LH* 6 ("Fu-hsü"), pp. 253f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 156f.); ("Huo-hsü"), pp. 264f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 164f.); ("Lung-hsü"), pp. 274f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 351f.); ("Lei-hsü"), pp. 286f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 285f.); *LH* 8 ("Ju-tseng"), pp. 353f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 494f.); ("I-tseng"), pp. 377f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. II, pp. 262f.); *LH* 9 ("Wen K'ung"), pp. 393f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 392f.); *LH* 10 ("Tz'u Meng"), pp. 452f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 418f.); *LH* 11 ("T'an-t'ien"), pp. 473f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 250f.); ("Shuo jih"), pp. 487f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 258f.); *LH* 14 ("Han-wen"), pp. 626f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 278f.); ("Ch'ien-kao"), pp. 634 f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 119f.); *LH* 15 ("Pien-tung"), pp. 649f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 109f.); *LH* 17 ("Shih-ying"), pp. 750f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. II, pp. 315f.); ("Chih-ch'i"), pp. 766f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. II, pp. 9f.); *LH* 19 ("Hsüan Han"), pp. 817f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. II, pp. 192f.).

than the inner, moral plane. The moral life of a man remains unaffected by worldly reverses and may continue to advance in spite of his other failings. Only the moral life, which is decided by an individual for himself, is of intrinsic value.

What can one accomplish by a moral life? Very little beyond that moral life itself, Wang Ch'ung asserted. A person cannot be assured that by being morally good he will have good health, long life, or other worldly advantages; in fact, he should refrain from such false expectations because otherwise he is bound to be disappointed, and it is this disappointment rather than any external factor that is most harmful to his moral well-being.[50]

Among all Chinese thinkers, Wang Ch'ung comes closest to a definition of moral autonomy for the inner spiritual world of a human being. According to Wang Ch'ung, the true value of Confucianism lay in its unique emphasis on the moral spirit of man.

The call to enforce the laws

The conflict between a commonsense affirmation of the pragmatic or utilitarian (hence Legalistic) approach to the world and an inner (hence Taoistic) need for freedom or autonomy for the self in the moral and spiritual realm characterized the upsurge of the Legalist and the Taoist subcurrents within the nominally Confucian synthesis. Many of the minor Confucian thinkers of the Later Han may be assigned to one of three categories: Confucian Legalists who were concerned with practical government measures or reforms; Confucian conservatives who were devoted to upholding the tradition of learning and rituals and the legitimacy of dynastic ruling power; and Confucian Taoists who adopted an attitude of defiance toward the outside world and turned their attention to a search for security and consolation in the moral and spiritual realms. This triple division coincided with the divergent interests of officials, literati, and the provincial elite.

When Wang Mang rose to power, he had had the initial support of these three kinds of Confucians. Wang Mang's idealistic reforms were probably supported by the literati and had the connivance of the officials, but were opposed by the provincial elite – the big landlords, the great families, and

50 *LH* 1 ("Feng-yü"), pp. 7f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. II, pp. 35f.); ("Ming-lu"), pp. 19f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, p. 144); *LH* 2 ("MIng-lu"), pp. 19f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, p. 141); ("Shuai-hsing"), pp. 63f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 374f.); *LH* 3 ("Pen-hsing"), pp. 123f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 384f.); *LH* 6 ("Fu-hsü"), pp. 253f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 156f.); ("Huo-hsü"), pp. 264f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, pp. 164f.); *LH* 9 ("Wen K'ung"), p. 419 (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, p. 409); *LH* 10 ("Fei Han"), p. 435 (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol., I, p. 434); ("Fei Han"), p. 441 (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. I, p. 438); *LH* 12 ("Ch'eng-ts'ai"), pp. 535f. (Forke, *Lun-heng*, Vol. II, pp. 56f.).

other local magnates who were instrumental in Wang Mang's downfall and the subsequent restoration of the Han house. The first three emperors of Later Han were conciliatory toward all three groups.

For those who were interested in orthodox learning and in official careers, the court reestablished the Imperial Academy and other government schools, as well as the examination, recommendation, and selection systems for recruitment of officials. The emperor personally participated in debates and lectures on orthodox Confucian doctrine at court conventions, and commissioned prominent scholars to devise numerous rituals (*li*) – sacrificial, ceremonial and educational – to be observed by the court. As for those who had experience and ability in practical administration and reform (*li shih*, pragmatic neo-Legalism),[51] the emperor showed a keen interest in proposals that would strengthen the position of the ruling house, increase the authority of the court, or centralize power in the emperor's hands. The emperor was, however, careful to ensure that such measures should not antagonize the provincial elite or disturb the local equilibrium. Being conciliatory, he even tolerated those who defied him and his court. In fact, the emperor praised highly those individuals who refused to humble themselves before him or to serve in the government, on the grounds that to do so would endanger their moral integrity or spiritual purity.[52]

To a certain extent, the attitudes of these Later Han emperors proved to be quite successful. From A.D. 30 to 90, the country was relatively peaceful and prosperous. Traditional Chinese historians had very high regard for Kuang-wu-ti (r. A.D. 25–57), Ming-ti (r. 57–75), and Chang-ti (r. 75–88).[53] Some acclaimed their moral leadership, which was said to have fostered the high moral spirit of Later Han; some praised their efficient administration, which was pragmatic (or Legalistic); others eulogized their promotion of Confucian scholarship and ritual, which were said to have been developed to their highest point in Chang-ti's time. But the question remains. How could an emperor or a regime sustain so many virtues and successes unless they were merely a façade?

By the end of the first century A.D., the façade cracked. The concentration of power in the hands of the emperor led to a violent power struggle between the emperor's distaff relatives and the palace eunuchs that seriously undermined effective government of the realm and heightened defiance from aristocrats and local magnates. The orthodox New Text School of Confucian learning no longer enjoyed the respect of true scholars; they turned to the unofficial Old Text School of Confucianism or other non-

51 See p. 767 above.
52 *HHS* 67, pp. 2184f.; *HHS* 79A, pp. 2545f.; *HHS* 81, pp. 2666f., 2675f.; *HHS* 83, pp. 2757f.
53 For appreciations of these emperors, see Chapter 5 above, pp. 363f.

Confucian traditions of thought to satisfy their scholarly and intellectual interests. The Imperial Academy became an institution of empty lecture halls and absentee students, lacking any real vitality as a center for learning. Court rituals became trivial formalities. The government could neither defend its frontiers against the influx of barbarian tribes nor control the extravagant and disorderly behavior of the big landlords and powerful families, who ignored the law with impunity as they exploited and oppressed the poor and the weak. Confucian thinkers, appalled at the state of affairs, searched agonizingly for quick remedies or escape.

Even at the beginning of Later Han, many prominent scholars and officials had criticized the court's lenient attitude toward the enforcement of the laws during the later years of Former Han and under Wang Mang's regime. Liang T'ung, a scholar of the *Spring and autumn annals* and an expert on law codes at the court of Kuang-wu-ti, advocated in A.D. 36 that strict enforcement of the penal law was crucial in maintaining public order; it was thus highly beneficial to the people even in the Confucian sense.[54] Although his Legalistic advocacy was said to have been opposed by many conservative Confucians, his advice was tacitly followed by court officials. The conservative Confucian Tu Lin, who rose to the position of grand minister of works in A.D. 47, testified that the Later Han regime was highly Legalistic, and he counseled that this should be complemented by an emphasis on the cultivation of moral virtue.[55]

Similar opinions were expressed by Lu Kung (32–112) and his brother, Lu P'i (37–111), the two most prominent Confucians at the courts of Chang-ti (r. 75–88) and Ho-ti (r. 88–106). The need for even stricter enforcement of the law was suggested by Chang Min. The suggestion was rejected by Chang-ti in A.D. 80, but later accepted by Ho-ti. According to Chang Min, the penal code was established by the sage-ruler to deal with social evils and was just as important as the Confucian canons.[56]

This emphasis on strict enforcement of the law, however, differed greatly from the ambitious classic Legalist schemes for achieving a maximum of totalitarian government power. The Confucians supported the use of law, but only as a last resort to maintain a minimum of control over the country. Later Han Confucian Legalists abhorred the increasingly powerful and refractory landed proprietors, the great families and clans, and other privileged social groups that undermined the effective administration of local and central government. They advocated strict enforcement of the law as virtually the last means of governance.

54 *HHS* 34, pp. 1166f. 55 *HHS* 27, pp. 937f.
56 For Lu Kung and Lu P'i, see *HHS* 25, pp. 873f., 883f. For Chang Min, see *HHS* 44, pp. 1502f.

In fact, even in the heyday of the dynasty, the court had been unable to curb the growing power of the local magnates. In its waning years, the court could not initiate a drastic reform of the social, economic, or political systems as advocated by the classic Legalists; it could merely attempt a more effective and realistic exercise of power within the existing system by tightening control over its own officials. As witnessed by the legal specialist Ch'en Ch'ung (fl. 76–106), the majority of the middle-ranking officials in the central administration had become preoccupied with their own interests and lacked any commitment to the dynasty. Ch'en Ch'ung's son, Ch'en Chung, also a prominent legal specialist, testified in A.D. 108 that officialdom had degenerated into a condition of sheer negligence, utter irresponsibility, outright disregard for law and order, or intentional obstruction of justice and withholding of information. His proposal to tighten control over the conduct of officials typified the attitude of a majority of the more concerned scholar-officials of that time.[57]

The moderate approach to reform and the cultivation of personal morality

Many eminent Confucians, including Wang T'ang (fl. 96–131), Tso Hsiung (d. 138), Li Ku (d. 148), and Yang Ping (92–165),[58] tended to favor a moderate approach aimed at reform of the civil service personnel system and tightening of control over officialdom. They looked to the recruitment and promotion of more honest and competent officials on the basis of reliable examinations, special selection, recommendation, and merit-based criteria for promotion or demotion. Ma Jung (79–166), one of the most eminent Confucians of Later Han, was an exception in upholding the importance of law (*fa*) and its strict enforcement.[59]

The moderate approach to reform also seems to have been favored by those Confucians who were inclined toward Taoism. Since the founding of the Later Han dynasty, Taoist attitudes of nonstriving, self-preservation, and eremitism had been adopted by an increasing number of Confucians who were disillusioned with politics and refused to serve in government. Many such were eminent members of the provincial elite or the great families. With the decline of imperial power and the loosening of the control exercised by the central government over local communities, these members of the elite found life on their comfortable and secure estates in

57 For Ch'en Ch'ung, see *HHS* 46, pp. 1547f. For Ch'en Chung's memorial, see *HHS* 46, pp. 1558f.
58 For Wang T'ang, see *HHS* 31, pp. 1105–1106. For Tso Hsiung, see *HHS* 61, pp. 2015; and Chapter 4 above, p. 306. For Li Ku, see *HHS* 63, pp. 2073f. and Chapter 4 above, pp. 307f., 310f. For Yang Ping, see *HHS* 54, pp. 1769f.
59 For Ma Jung, see *HHS* 60A, pp. 1953–1978, and Chapter 14 above, p. 764.

the provinces to be more enjoyable than the struggle and intrigue at the imperial court. Even among those who served at court, many found that the Taoist attitude of resignation made life in the civil service less hazardous. As early as the middle of the first century A.D., a career-minded official, Chung-li I, had advised his superior that a high-ranking civil servant should not attend personally to the trivial affairs of government, but rather should concern himself only with matters of importance so that he would not lose sight of priorities. In this sense, Chung-li I considered some of the Taoist-inclined elite to be best qualified for high government office.[60]

The Confucian-Taoist view of reform in the early second century A.D. was best espoused by the prominent men of letters Fan Chun (d. 118) and Chu Mu (100–163). Fan Chun came from one of the wealthiest and most influential clans of Nan-yang commandery; his forebears had been among the leading Confucian Taoists of Later Han. In his memorial to the throne in A.D. 106, Fan Chun praised the effort made by the early rulers of Later Han to promote Confucianism, and indicated that Confucian scholarship had reached its zenith in the period A.D. 58–75. At the same time, he decried the fact that orthodox Confucianism had become only empty form. He admitted that both law and Confucian scholarship were important to the state, but implied that neither could foster in man the moral virtue which alone could sustain good law and true scholarship.

According to Fan Chun, such virtue was better cultivated by the Taoist. He asserted that the ascendancy of the Taoist teachings of the Huang-Lao school, favored by Wen-ti and his empress in the early years of Former Han, had purified the realm's moral spirit, and this in turn had led to the prosperity and successful reform of the subsequent reigns of Ching-ti (r. 157–141 B.C.) and Wu-ti (r. 141–87 B.C.). He suggested that the emperor should seek out those recluses who lived in retirement, cultivating their personal virtue, and invite them to the court.[61]

Similar advice was presented by Chu Mu, who came from another great family of Confucians in Nan-yang commandery. In his *Ch'ung-hou lun* (Discourse in praise of liberality), Chu Mu decried the decline of the moral tradition in the realm, which had become "skin-thin."[62] This condition had not arisen suddenly, but was the cumulative result of gradual cultural degeneration. Citing Confucius's saying that even Confucius himself had been born too late to witness the great Way that had once prevailed throughout the realm, Chu Mu expounded the Taoist thesis that:

60 *HHS* 41, pp. 1406f. 61 *HHS* 32, pp. 1125f. 62 *HHS* 43, pp. 1463f.

When men had violated their original moral virtue [*te-hsing*], they began to honor the precepts of human-heartedness [*jen*] and righteousness [*i*]. When the principles of proper conduct [*li*] and the codes of law [*fa*] were upheld, the nature of primitive innocence [*shun-p'u*] was dissolved in man.

Chu Mu thus considered the Confucian moral teaching to be the product of an age of degeneration; it functioned only as a short-term remedy for social ills, but could not reverse the long-term trend of human degeneration. This degeneration had been a cumulative development, and no quick solution would avail against it. What was needed was for every individual to mend his own way and to accumulate a personal morality with some depth (*hou*), so that in the long run the general trend might be reversed. The way to begin this was for every individual to cultivate a depth (*hou*) of feeling toward his fellow man – to be more liberal and generous (*hou*, thickness) and less critical or fault-finding (*po*, thin) in his dealings with others. In an injunction to the members of his family, Chu Mu emphasized that they should not criticize others, but should always praise and encourage what was good in other men; this was not only the way to cultivate liberality (*hou*), but also a method of self-preservation in a corrupt and dangerous world.

Ts'ui Shih's drastic advice

While many Taoists favored retirement from the world in order to nourish a personal virtue, with the aim of eventually salvaging the realm from its spiritual degeneration, other Taoists, especially those from the more purposive Huang-Lao school, saw immediate dangers in the realm of public affairs that could not wait for a long-range solution. This latter type of Taoist not only supported the moderate approach to reform mentioned above, but even advocated that drastic Legalistic measures were required by the times. The attitude of these Taoists turned Legalists was exemplified by the writings of Ts'ui Shih (d. 170) and Wang Fu (ca. 90–165).

In his essay *Cheng lun* (On the administration), Ts'ui Shih criticized the dynastic rulers for being lax, government officials for being self-serving and corrupt, soldiers on the frontier for being undisciplined and dispirited, and great merchants and local magnates for being extravagant and licentious.[63] He denigrated both the conservative scholar-officials who counseled the court to follow the established precedent in government affairs and the idealists who advocated the model of the sage-rulers of antiquity. According to Ts'ui Shih, the Han regime was gravely ill and this illness could not

63 *HHS* 52, pp. 1725f.; *CHHW* 46, pp. 4b–7a, 10a; and Chapter 4 above, pp. 311f.

be healed by routine treatment; it was also futile to dream of a perfect government under current conditions. The principle of government should be changed according to the needs of different times. What was needed at the present time were the high-handed Legalistic measures of the hegemons (*pa*), with an emphasis on reward and punishment. He suggested that the emperor should concentrate all power in his own hands and use it like a sword to cut out the malignancy in the body politic. The court should cultivate open-mindedness in its ruler, but demand strict obedience from its ministers and subjects. It should encourage agriculture and discourage commercial and industrial profiteering.[64]

Ts'ui Shih's counsel was, however, quite impractical, given the actual conditions of the time. By the middle of the second century A.D. the Han ruler was not only powerless to command the absolute loyalty of subjects in the remote local communities, but also unable to control appointed officials in the provinces; he was soon to lose his hold even over the courtiers around him. Ts'ui Shih decried a state wherein:[65]

> At present, officials in charge of regions [*chou*] and commanderies [*chün*] themselves disobey imperial edicts, wilfully and freely modifying and changing such orders. Time and again, when [the emperor] issued an edict to prohibit or exterminate some [evil], he would emphasize his intention in great earnest or plead for the cause with passion or he might criticize and scold the officials solemnly and severely, but these officials would soon ignore him and never intend to repent or mend their ways. Therefore a common saying in local communities was: "Orders from the provincial and commandery governments come like thunderbolts; imperial edicts are received merely to hang on the wall [as decorations]."

Ts'ui Shih contradicted his Legalistic counsel when he wrote that any quick and drastic administrative measures would produce more bad than good results, and denounced current administrative practice as cruel, oppressive, and fault-finding.[66] His counsel that the ruler should treat high officials with greater leniency and be more generous toward lower-ranking officials, though practical, was also inconsistent with his advocacy of absolute power for the emperor. Ts'ui Shih thus failed to reconcile the conflict between his own Taoist and Legalist inclinations.

Wang Fu: Moral values, public justice, and leadership

Wang Fu, a self-proclaimed hermit, was more successful in synthesizing the Legalist, Confucian, and Taoist trends of thought in his time. Like Ts'ui Shih, Wang Fu was greatly alarmed by the contemporary situation.

64 *CHHW* 46, pp. 2a, 3b–7a, 12a, 13a.
65 *CHHW* 46, p. 12a. See also *CHHW* 46, pp. 2a, 3b–9b.
66 *CHHW* 46, pp. 7b et seq.

In his *Ch'ien-fu lun* (Discourses of a recluse), Wang Fu discussed in detail how the current tendencies of various groups of people deviated from what he considered to be the original and fundamental moral norms (*pen*). He lamented:[67]

Policy-makers should encourage agricultural production but now they favor non-productive pursuits. Artisans and manufacturers should produce useful articles but now they work on decorative objects. Merchants and traders should circulate goods but now they turn to hoarding and speculating in commodities. Confucian masters and teachers should propagate the moral and just way but now they devote themselves to specious argument. Men of letters should write in good faith and earnest accord but now they prize deceitful grandiloquence. Those famed gentlemen should distinguish themselves in filial virtues but now they pay more attention to culivating friendship and social intercourse with outsiders. Those who are known for their filial virtues should emphasize the nourishing of their parents but now they are concerned mainly with flowery appearance and display. Officials should be loyal and upright in their conduct toward the state but now they are inclined to appease the ruler and improperly endear themselves to him.

According to Wang Fu, these norms constitute the origins (*pen*) of social well-being. Human beings have the willpower and the intellect in themselves, as well as the guidance from the canons and the teachings of the former sages, with which to recognize and follow such norms. But they must decide whether they will uphold or violate these norms. If they attempt to uphold the norms, then even a deceitful person can be induced to live according to them; but if they choose to violate them, then even a conscientious and sincere person might be swayed to join his fellows in deviating from them.[68] This emphasis on prescribed norms and on the human effort (*wei* and *wu*) needed to sustain them was a basic postulate of the Hsün Ch'ing school of Confucianism. Wang Fu also shared Hsün-tzu's view that good or evil traditions were the result of cumulative human actions.

Two basic premises thus underlie Wang Fu's analysis of the evil conditions of his time and the necessary remedy. First, evil conditions are created by man and therefore can and must be rectified by rational and effective human effort; second, such evils are not the result of the actions of any one individual or government, but have been accumulated through many generations and therefore will not be readily eliminated by any simple or short-term measure.[69] On the basis of this analysis, Wang Fu reconciled a Taoist approach toward the individual man with a Legalist approach toward the body politic; he believed that both could contribute to the realization of the long-range Confucian goal of universal harmony.

67 *CFL* 1 ("Wu pen"), pp. 14f., and Chapter 11 above, pp. 609f.
68 *CFL* 1 ("Tsan hsüeh"), pp. 1f.; ("Wu pen"), pp. 19f.
69 *CFL* 3 ("Shen wei"), pp. 142f.; *CFL* 8 ("Te hua"), pp. 377f.

Confronted by the prevalent evils of his time, Wang Fu argued, an individual must make a tremendous effort to resist all kinds of outside temptations and pressures in order to preserve his personal integrity and inner moral autonomy. It is this inner moral autonomy, not outward achievements such as "high positions, great emoluments, wealth or honor," that should be the measure of a superior man (*chün-tzu*). Mediocre, ordinary people often judge a person's worth by his outward achievements. But a superior man might not have the benefit of those outward achievements, which are determined by random chance and fate (*tsao-ming*).[70] Furthermore, under such evil conditions those who are capable of undertaking the difficult task of becoming a superior man are rare. Therefore a superior man is lonely. He is in a dangerous situation because the majority of people misunderstand him, and many evil persons will slander and harm him. It is thus best for such a superior man to retire from the world. The Later Han Confucian ideal of the autonomous moral life thus strengthened the Taoist eremitic inclination.[71]

Concerning the ruler, however, Wang Fu's advice was highly Legalistic. He believed that the ruler is not a private person (*ssu*), but is given by Heaven a public (*kung*) responsibility to care for the state. As a public figure, he must devote himself to the practice of statecraft, the control and exercise of power, and the application of "generous rewards" and "severe punishments"; he should not delegate this awesome power and responsibility to others. To manage the state, he should possess a "public intelligence" based on open-mindedness, unobstructed communication of information, and comprehensive consultation with others. He must not be biased, nor narrow-minded, nor self-willed or self-interested as a mere private person may be, but must rely on the public intelligence to establish and uphold the public laws and ordinances. Otherwise he betrays the command of Heaven.

Since "government offices were established in Heaven's trust," the ruler must make these official appointments in accordance with the public laws and ordinances, and solely for the public good. If not, he has "committed the crime of stealing an office from Heaven and converting it into his private property."[72] Wang Fu's emphasis on public rulership, public intelligence, public law, and public offices thus elevated neo-Legalism to a new intellectual plane.

70 *CFL* 1 ("Lun jung"), pp. 32f. 71 *CFL* 1 ("Hsien nan"), pp. 39f.

72 *CFL* 1 ("Tsan hsüeh"), pp. 1f.; ("Wu pen"), pp. 14f.; ("Lun jung"), pp. 32f.; ("Hsien nan"), pp. 39f.; ("Pen cheng"), pp. 88f. *CFL* 2 ("Ch'ien ch'i"), pp. 96f.; *CFL* 3 ("Chung kuei"), pp. 108f.; ("Shih kung"), pp. 150f.; *CFL* 4 ("Pan lu"), pp. 161f.; ("Shu she"), pp. 173f.; *CFL* 5 ("Shuai chih"), pp. 238f.; *CFL* 8 ("Ming chung"), pp. 356f.

In spite of his emphasis on public justice, Wang Fu did not place all individuals on an equal level, but rather thought that, as individuals, some are intrinsically better than others. It is therefore the public duty of the ruler to be without bias and not to favor those who are personally dear to him, but to search for the better persons and appoint them to office according to criteria of true merit. Otherwise, the ruler has defied Heaven and cannot rule for long.[73]

Concerning the long-range goal of the body politic, Wang Fu suggested that if a ruler is open-minded and has faith in the public law, this will lead to the proper enforcement of such law. This in turn will produce a system of official selection and recommendation based on true merit; such a system will ensure that officials are good and loyal men who will care for the welfare of the people. This, in turn, will lead to a good reign, and the people will be peaceful and happy. The Will of Heaven having been fulfilled, the *yin* and *yang* forces of the cosmos will be in harmony, and all will be well.[74]

On the surface, Wang Fu seems to accept the Legalist claim that practical statecraft alone can create in the world an age of "great harmony." This, however, was not his basic intent. Wang Fu admitted that the cruder elements of statecraft, such as laws and ordinances, punishments and rewards, were the means to rule the people and to achieve orderly administration. But he argued that these were not sufficient to promote a great transformation (*ta-hua*), or inaugurate an era of great peace (*t'ai-p'ing*) within the realm.[75] To achieve this higher goal, he wrote:[76]

> One must begin from the truly original [*yüan-yüan*] and go back to the truly fundamental [*pen-pen*]; promote the Way [*tao*] so as to attain harmony; [foster] the pure [moral] essence which then would produce an honest and liberal populace; elucidate the moral norm and the just standard and cultivate a mind that is faithful and generous; then the transformation would be graceful and great achievements would be accomplished.

Above and beyond the Confucian-Legalist emphasis on practical statecraft, Wang Fu thus reaffirmed the Confucian-Taoist ideal of an all-embracing moral-cosmic transformation.

However, insofar as the transformation involved human efforts and government programs, Wang Fu was inclined toward Hsün Ch'ing's teachings. He wrote:[77]

73 *CFL* 3 ("Chung kuei"), pp. 118f.
74 *CFL* 2 ("Pen cheng"), pp. 88f.
75 *CFL* 8 ("Pen hsün"), pp. 365f.
76 *CFL* 8 ("Pen hsün"), pp. 371.
77 *CFL* 8 ("Te hua"), pp. 372f.

The effect of [moral-cosmic] transformation which changes the people's mind is like the effect of government programs which change the people's bodily conditions. When a benevolent government program is imposed on the people, the latter are more [likely to have a bodily condition that is] clean and relaxed, gracious and sound, steady and strong, and long-lived. When an evil government program is imposed on the people, the latter tend to be fatigued and disfigured, disabled and diseased, confused and retarded, and chronically ill. . . . The shape of the human body and its bone structure are steady and strong; even so, they may be changed and altered by government programs. How much more [malleable] will be the mind and the spirit which are refined and subtle.

When the populace receives good [moral] influence, they will have the mind of the superior man [*chün-tzu*]; when they suffer from evil administration, they will embrace treacherous and rebellious thought. . . . The transforming deed lies in the one who rules and guides them.

In this passage, a distinction may be made between subtle moral-cosmic transformations and practical government programs, as well as between the mind and the body, and between the one who guides and the one who rules the people. Of course, all would be well if a sage-ruler excelled in both personal morality and public-mindedness and could rule as well as guide the people. But this was hardly possible, given the evil conditions of the time. To Wang Fu, a sage-ruler and an age of great unity (*ta-t'ung*) were but remote possibilities.

Wang Fu discussed rulership primarily as a public office, as Heaven's trust, with its corresponding power and responsibilities. But he did not ascribe to a ruler an automatic moral superiority. He was, in fact, reluctant to comment on the ruler as a private person. It may be argued that if the ruler is not a sage, or if his personal virtue is flawed, he might then also lack the open-mindedness needed to discharge his public responsibilities.[78] Wang Fu clearly recognized such a possibility and suggested two safeguards. First, if this happens, the ruler will have forfeited Heaven's trust and will not be able to maintain himself for long. Second, although the ruler through his policies will have a tremendous impact for good or ill upon the general populace, there are still men who are not susceptible to such influence. Among the people there exist rare examples of the superior man who can withstand the evils that have infected society and cultivate their inner morality in bad times as well as good. These are the sages and worthies, Wang Fu wrote:[79]

who will not follow the mundane convention, nor blindly conform [to the prevalent mode], nor listen to the fashionable opinion and base their judgments there-

78 *CFL* 1 ("Hsien nan"), p. 51; 2 ("Ming an"), pp. 55f.; 2 ("Ssu hsien"), 74f.; 3 ("Chung kuei"), pp. 114f. 79 *CFL* 8 ("Te hua"), pp. 371f.

upon. They will approach the good and pay no attention to the ridicule that is commonly directed against the poor and the humble. They will [oppose] evil and give no consideration to the wealth and honor [that is usually associated with it].

These superior men of high principle refine their feelings and concentrate their attention [on the higher goals]. Their minds envision the unique. . . ; they are not confused by the sayings of the [mediocre] multitude. Their wisdom and intellect are far more superior. . . . They are not afraid to stand up alone, and they are not distressed by retiring from the world. Their minds are as sturdy as precious metals and stones. And their ideals are so lofty that they make [the possessions of the realm] within the four seas seem rather inconsequential by comparison. They may free their mind and still hold it under control; thus truthfulness is accomplished. . . . Even if they are exiled to the wilderness beyond the outermost frontiers or confined in a secluded dark place [where they cannot be seen], they will never display improper conduct. Even if they are thrust into great danger with the threat of death, or are placed against the sharp edge of a sword or spearhead, they will have absolutely no thought of pusillanimously preserving their own lives [in violation of their high principles].

These Confucian-Taoist sages and worthies thus safeguard the free spirit and moral autonomy of mankind against any wayward rulers.

Due to their superior spiritual virtue, these sages and worthies were entrusted by Heaven with a higher mission in the world. Wang Fu proclaimed:[80]

The sage functions as Heaven's mouth, and the worthies serve as the sage's interpreters. Therefore, the sayings of the sage express Heaven's mind and heart, and the commentaries of the worthies expound the sage's meaning.

Since these superior men would not degrade themselves or their high principles to approach the earthly ruler, it is the ruler's obligation to recognize their superiority and accord them the honor and high position that is their due. Hence the urgency of reforming the civil service personnel system on the basis of true merit. It is this system that should bring together the Legalistic ruler and the Taoistic superior men in a harmonious Confucian union.[81]

Wang Fu's writings clearly indicate the danger of a confrontation between the ruler who demands obedience of his subjects for the good of the state, and those superior men who strive for spiritual freedom and moral autonomy in defiance of any earthly power, be it the ruler's authority or the vulgar opinion of the people. According to Wang Fu, the burden of resolving this conflict falls mainly on the office of the ruler. In other words, while the superior man is accorded the freedom to be individualistic or even antisocial, the ruler is faulted for his inability to maintain the unity of state and society.

80 *CFL* 2 ("K'ao chi"), p. 72. 81 *CFL* 2 ("Ming an"), pp. 54f.; 2 ("K'ao chi"), pp. 62f.

THE BREAKDOWN OF CENTRAL AUTHORITY

The individual and the state: disillusion with public life

The emphasis on the schism between the individual and the state, as evidenced in the writings of Later Han, is in striking contrast with the vision cherished by Former Han thinkers of an all-embracing unity within the world. In the heyday of the Former Han dynasty, the ruler was conceived of not only as the dispenser of earthly power, honor, and wealth, but also as the pivot that effected spiritual and cosmic harmony. An individual's worth was judged on the basis of his accomplishment in government service, rather than by his personal morality or familial virtue. In some cases, the call to service by a ruler was sufficient justification for a person to cut short the three-year mourning period prescribed for the death of a parent.

In Later Han, however, one sees a shift in the relative values assigned to the public and the private spheres. In the early years of Later Han, there had been a few prominent individuals who were so utterly disillusioned with court politics that they refused to accept government office.[82] As Later Han declined, this type of behavior became the vogue among members of the elite, and a new ideal that attracted some eminent Confucian scholars, as well as numerous provincial notables and local magnates. These were no longer simply frustrated individuals who had failed to win promotion in the civil service; often they were owners of prosperous estates, heads of great families and clans, or men with good connections and prestige in the provincial communities, where they served as patrons of learning and the arts and as arbiters of local customs and mores.[83] As the court's control over the countryside deteriorated, an increasing number of such notables found that retirement in the provinces was more pleasant, and their leadership and service at the local level more rewarding, than an official career at the imperial court. In Confucian parlance, when these superior men had become disillusioned with the great unity of the imperial order, they retreated to establish a lesser unity for themselves on the local level.

As centrifugal trends within the Later Han elite accelerated, a subtle conceptual change may be seen developing from Wang Ch'ung's view of the nature of the superior man's autonomous moral life to Wang Fu's view.

82 See above, p. 784 note 52.

83 See Chen, *Life and reflections*, pp. 13–18, 24f.; Patricia Ebrey, "Estate and family management in the Later Han as seen in the *Monthly instructions for the four classes of people*," *JESHO*, 17 (1974), 173–205; Patricia Ebrey, *The aristocratic families of early imperial China: A case study of the Po-ling Ts'ui family* (Cambridge, 1978); and Chapter 11 above, pp. 637f.

Wang Ch'ung's concern is with a private person who has been wronged by the world and can neither accomplish anything of worth in the earthly establishment nor receive any reward from it, and who thus finds a pure and autonomous moral life to be his sole consolation. Wang Fu speaks of a superior man who considers honor, high position, and wealth to be his due without regard for the earthly ruler's will, and who confidently claims a sphere of action which is not only independent of the ruler's political power, but even takes precedence over it:[84]

[Superior men] cherish their ideal with firm devotion. . . . Even the ruler of an empire of the four seas cannot equal their fame; and the rulers of states cannot contest their influences. By holding fast to their ideal inside their own houses, they spread righteousness beyond the nine great provinces.

Wang Fu's argument that a public union might be preserved by an enlightened ruler who wielded supreme power and yet was open-minded and self-denying in cultivating the good will and support of the increasingly vigorous and self-assertive local elite is consistent with the Confucian emphasis on compromise. It was a lofty moral ideal, but the possibility of its realization in Later Han times was slight. The political history of Later Han bears clear testimony to the futility of numerous attempts to reconcile the schism between the autocratic ruler and the elite establishment.

Protest and proscription

As observed above, the early Later Han rulers were remarkably conciliatory in their attitude toward the powerful big clans and landlords as well as toward disaffected scholar-officials. But they also took special measures to preserve the vital power in their own hands. Kuang-wu-ti (r. A.D. 25–57), Ming-ti (r. 57–75), and Chang-ti (r. 75–88) accomplished this by retaining the system of senior offices introduced in 8 B.C. In place of the chancellor, (*ch'eng-hsiang*), imperial counsellor (*yü-shih ta-fu*), and the supreme commander (*t'ai wei*), it was the Three Excellencies (*san kung*) who constituted the highest authorities of state. Their duty it was "to sit and deliberate on the Way," while the administrative responsibilities of their predecessors were taken over by lesser secretaries who served at the ruler's pleasure. Furthermore, all "outsiders," including all who held official posts, were excluded from service within the emperor's palace chambers. This service was now performed by eunuchs, who were the personal servants of the ruler and his palace ladies.[85]

84 *CFL* 1 ("E-li"), pp. 27–8.

85 See Hans Bielenstein, *The bureaucracy of Han times* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 11f.; Chapter 8 above, pp. 492f., 501f.

While these measures insulated the ruler from the pressure of the elite, they also reduced his contact with the outside world. Isolated in the palace and surrounded by eunuchs, later emperors of the dynasty came to rely more and more on the eunuchs' service and support in their effort to boost the declining dynasty's power. In this manner, the emperor and the eunuchs repeatedly gained control of the court by coups in A.D. 91, 121, 125, 159, and 168. In the ensuing political struggles, the officials, who found their legitimate position at the court threatened by the eunuchs, allied themselves with dissatisfied Confucian men of learning and the Taoist-inclined local elite in a righteous protest (*ch'ing-i*) against the wayward ruler and his irregular eunuch agency. For this, the court accused them of engaging in partisan conspiracy (*tang*) and initiated a series of persecutions (*tang-ku*) in A.D. 166, 169, 172, and 176. The schism thus developed into an open confrontation.[86]

The scholars' dissident voice gave intellectual respectability to the partisans of the protest movement. The protesting partisans viewed their movement as a crusade to establish a spiritual and moral order for the realm independent of the political power of the corrupt dynasty. They styled their leaders as the "three rulers" (*san chün*), who were "worshipped and supported by the whole realm," the "eight eminences" (*pa tsun*), who were "outstanding leaders of men," the "eight guides" (*pa ku*), "whose superior moral conduct served as guidance for the people," the "eight aides" (*pa chi*), "who helped the people to follow their leaders," and the "eight treasurers" (*pa ch'u*), "who contributed their wealth to relieve the plight of the people."[87]

The proscriptions lasted for more than twenty years and affected many aspects of the political and intellectual life of Later Han. Aggravated by government persecution, the movement became more violent in character and more radical in its antigovernment stance. At the height of the movement, even some of the Confucian classics, which constituted the canonical writ of imperial orthodoxy, came to be reinterpreted in such a way as to justify a moral crusade against the corrupt dynasty, as can be seen in Hsün Shuang's commentaries on the *Book of changes*.

Hsün Shuang: the Book of changes *as a means of protest*

Hsün Shuang (128–190) came from an influential family of Ying-ch'uan commandery, which had been a hotbed of political agitation during the

86 For these persecutions, see *HHS* 67, pp. 2183f.; Chen, *Life and reflections*, pp. 10f.; Chapter 3 above, pp. 287f.; Chapter 5 above, pp. 327f.
87 *HHS* 67, p. 2187.

protest movement.[88] His own family was deeply involved in the movement, and Hsün Shuang himself lived under government proscription for some fifteen years, from about A.D. 169 to 184. He at first fled to an unspecified coastal region and subsequently lived in hiding along the Han River, where he devoted his time to study and writing, becoming in time a prominent Confucian master. Among his works were a complete set of traditions (*chuan*; traditions of interpretation, commentaries) on the Five Classics, *Pien-ch'an* (Criticism of the prognostic writings), *Han-yü*, a collection of commentaries on the events of Han times, and *Hsin-shu*, a collection of essays entitled *New book*. All these were subsequently lost, with the exception of his *I chuan* (Tradition of the Book of changes), parts of which have been preserved in later commentaries on the *Book of changes*.

The *Book of changes*, with its uncertain origin, rich symbolism, and esoteric meaning, has probably been the most controversial of all the classics in Confucian exegetic scholarship. In Han times treatment of this book could vary widely, ranging from occult prognostication, to numerological and cosmological speculation, to political and moral philosophizing; exegetes generally drew on all these possibilities in their interpretation. Hsün Shuang's commentary is distinguished by its unique insistence that the symbolism of the *Book of changes* is an expression of a moral and political conflict between the just and the unjust forces within the state, a conflict that presages an inevitable victory for the forces of justice. Within the linear constructs of the hexagrams, which present various situations of tension in the body politic, he identified the forces of justice with the unbroken *yang* line (———), and the unjust forces with the broken *yin* line (— —). Take, for example, the fifteenth hexagram, *ch'ien* (modesty):

— — 6th line
— — 5th line
— — 4th line
——— 3rd line
— — 2nd line
— — 1st line

The six lines in a hexagram, from the lowest to the highest, represent the fixed positions in the state hierarchy: the first is the position of the *yüan-shih*, gentlemen-scholars without official rank or the lowest officials; the second, *ta-fu*, counsellors and middle-ranking officials; the third, *san kung*, the Three Excellencies and high officials; the fourth, *chu-hou*, feudal lords; the fifth, *t'ien-tzu*, the Son of Heaven; and the sixth, *tsung miao*, the

88 For Hsün Shuang, see *HHS* 62, pp. 2050f.; *HHS* 79A, p. 2554; Chen Chi-yun, "A Confucian magnate's idea of political violence: Hsün Shuang's (128–190) interpretation of the *Book of changes*," *TP*, 54 (1968), 73–115; and Chen, *Life and reflections*, pp. 28f. et passim.

ancestral temple of the ruling dynasty. This last represented the spirits or the ancestors of the living ruler, including his deceased parents, but as interpreted by Hsün Shuang it also implied the influence of the ruler's living mother, the empress dowager, and her kin as well as her eunuch servants.

Without violating the concept of state hierarchy or tampering excessively with the canonical text, Hsün Shuang conveyed his dissident message by carefully choosing favorable comments for those texts pertaining to a *yang* line in the lower positions (symbolic of the just man wronged by the regime); and he reserved his unfavorable comments for those texts pertaining to a *yin* line in the higher positions (symbolic of the domination of the state by unjust persons). Together, these depicted a situation of crisis, in which the rising new force of justice inevitably overcomes the declining old power of injustice. Thus Hsün Shuang's favorable commentary on the *yang* line in the third position of the fifteenth hexagram reads:[89]

> A [strong] *yang* line should [rise to] occupy the fifth [the emperor's] position. . . . All the [wicked] *yin* lines should obey this *yang*. Therefore the Tradition says: "The myriad people will submit to him."

And his unfavorable commentary on the *yin* line in the fifth position (the position of the emperor) reads:

> The fourth and sixth lines [the princes and the empress dowager] are close to the fifth line [the emperor]. They [the *yin* – weak, female or wicked] rule over the *yang* line [the strong, and just character in the lower third position]. This is presumptuous. Therefore they will not prosper. . . . The *yang* line may use military force to his advantage [against the ruling *yin* characters]. No one dares to do him harm.

In his commentary on the twenty-fourth hexagram, *fu* (returning),[90]

— — 6th line
— — 5th line
— — 4th line
— — 3rd line
— — 2nd line
——— 1st line

Hsün Shuang identified the *yang* line in the lowest position as the emerging force of justice, and his commentary reads:

> It is favorable [for this *yang* character in the lowest position] to rise to the fifth position [the emperor's]. The virtue of the *yang* character is increasing. . . . The *yang* rises from the [lowest] first position. This is the will of Heaven and earth.

89 *Chou-i Hsün-shih chu* 1, p. 18a. 90 *Chou-i Hsün-shih chu* 1, p. 23a.

Conversely, he identified the *yin* line in the topmost sixth position of the hexagram as the wicked power, the empress dowager and her eunuchs, that deployed military force to fight against insurrection. The commentary reads:

This means that those in the topmost position put the army in action to resist the [one that rises from the lowest] first position. The *yang* force, in its upsurge, will inevitably exterminate the host of the *yin* characters [in high positions]. Therefore the result [of such military action] will be a great defeat.

Hsün Shuang's commentary on the thirtieth hexagram, *li* (fire) is explicit; it reads:[91]

——— 6th line
— — 5th line
——— 4th line
——— 3rd line
— — 2nd line
——— 1st line

The first line symbolizes the rising sun. The second, the high noon. The third, sunset. This means that the way of the ruler is declining.

The message was even more ominous in a further set of commentaries on the same hexagram by nine anonymous masters who were closely associated with Hsün Shuang; this reads:[92]

The setting sun must fall.
How can it last long?

Using the imagery of a consuming fire, Hsün Shuang presaged a revolution that would overthrow the wicked ruler. His commentary reads:[93]

When the *yang* rises . . . the *yin* [in the emperor's position] must retreat to the fourth position, falling down like ashes. This *yin*, being an undeserving character, had occupied the emperor's position and oppressed the *yang*. Now it has come to the end of its predetermined course and will be condemned to death by the Mandate of Heaven. It will lose its position and the people will revolt against it . . . destroyed by fire . . . to death. When the fire is over, the ashes will be thrown away.

Throughout the history of China, the *Book of changes* has been interpreted in many ways by many thinkers, but the way in which Hsün Shuang manipulated it to launch such a violent attack on the throne is unprecedented and unique. The popularity of Hsün Shuang's *Tradition of the Book of changes* was attested to by his nephew, Hsün Yüeh, who stated that during

91 *Chou-i Hsün-shih chu* 1, p. 25b.
92 See the comments of the *chiu-chia*: *Chiu-chia i-chieh*, 13b.
93 *Chou-i Hsün-shih chu* 1, p. 25b.

the last quarter of the second century "in the areas of Yen and Yü [roughly the middle Yellow River and the upper Huai River valleys] those who studied the *Book of changes* all followed Hsün [Shuang's] teaching."[94] The impact of Hsün Shuang's teaching on the popular mind, especially its impact on the religious movement that culminated in the Yellow Turban uprising in A.D. 184, remains a matter of conjecture.

The Way of the Great Peace and the Yellow Turbans

The religious movement known as the Way of the Great Peace (*T'ai-p'ing tao*) was initiated by the three brothers Chang Chüeh, Chang Pao, and Chang Liang in about A.D. 170, at approximately the same time as Hsün Shuang began his *Tradition of the Book of changes*. The movement drew its inspiration from a variety of sources, such as philosophical and religious Taoism, *yin-yang* and Five Elements cosmology. From the latter it derived the color yellow of the element earth that blessed the Yellow Turban insurgents. The movement also drew on the Confucian concept of the possibility of a change of the Mandate of Heaven, and the ideal of great peace and equality (*t'ai-p'ing*), from which it derived the name Way of the Great Peace. These sources, as mentioned earlier, also influenced the interpretation of the *Book of changes* in Han times.

In slightly more than ten years, the movement attracted several hundred thousand followers, among whom were not only poor peasants, but also some wealthy persons; it also received the connivance and even the praise of many local officials and members of the provincial elite. In A.D. 184 the movement burst into armed insurrection in central and eastern China, areas that had been the hotbed of political agitation during the *ch'ing-i* protest. The upper Han River Valley in western China (where Hsün Shuang had lived in hiding for more than ten years) likewise soon became the bastion of an autonomous Taoist state founded by Chang Lu and his sect, the Way of the Five Pecks of Grain *Wu-tou-mi tao*. Coincidences like these indicate at least that the prevalent mood of dissatisfaction with the ruling dynasty had spread from a few sensitive thinkers to elite groups and provincial populations in many parts of China, and that the attitudes of protest, defiance, resistance, and revolt tended to intermingle.[95]

Under the threat of the Yellow Turban insurrection, the court lifted the *tang-ku* proscription. Alarmed by the destruction wrought by the insurgents, leaders of the righteous protest (*ch'ing-i*) movement rallied to the

94 *Ch'ien-Han chi* 25, p. 5a.
95 Chen, *Life and reflections*, pp. 30–39. See also Chapter 16 below, pp. 815f.

support of the faltering dynasty. The major uprising was suppressed within a few months, but minor insurrections continued to spread. The court lost its control over the army as well as over the provinces, which were in the hands of frontier generals, regional governors, and local magnates, many of whom had been partisans of the *ch'ing-i* protest movement. The power struggle between the eunuch faction and the partisans of the *ch'ing-i* went on at the court for a few more years until A.D. 189, when Ling-ti died. In a subsequent coup, the militant partisans sent their troops to attack and burn the imperial palace, massacre the eunuchs, and drive the successor to the throne into flight. China was plunged into civil war and the Later Han dynasty effectively came to an end, although a figurehead ruler, Hsien-ti, was installed and reigned in name until A.D. 220.[96]

Military men, particularly frontier generals, whose armies were decimated in the protracted civil war, also tended to lose out. What emerged on the political scene from A.D. 189 to 280 were several regional states sustained by allied groups of scholar-officials and local magnates, the former with their knowledge and experience of statecraft and their appeal for unity and order, and the latter with their solid support from the holders of landed estates and powerful clans. The sociopolitical and the intellectual-ideological foundations for such an alliance had been fashioned in the preceding centuries by the expansion of Confucian education and institutions of the civil service, which recruited a great proportion of the scholar-officials from among large landholders and the powerful clans. It was also influenced by the popularization of the Confucian emphasis on harmony and compromise as a political, social, and moral ideal for the state, provincial society, and local communities, as well as for the family and clan. On the other hand, disillusion with the ideal of grand unity, a feeling of dissatisfaction with the imperial regime, and the exaltation of spiritual freedom and moral autonomy in Later Han thought had the effect of transferring the Confucian appeal to the more tangible goal of a "lesser unity" to be founded on the solid basis of the individual and his concentric circles of family and clan, friends and community.

The importance of kinship and its obligations

The new exaltation of family morality was clearly expressed by Hsün Shuang in a memorial which he submitted to the throne in A.D. 166 when he was selected by the court for his "superior filial virtue" (*chih-hsiao*).[97] In this memorial, Hsün Shuang stated that according to the theory of Five

96 Chen, *Life and reflections*, pp. 40–65. See Chapter 5 above, pp. 341f. 97 *HHS* 62, p. 2051.

Elements, the Han dynasty was of the element fire, and so should honor the virtue of filial piety (the virtue of the element fire) as the highest moral principle of the empire. He reiterated an obscure court order said to have been issued under the auspices of Wang Mang that established the *Hsiao-ching* (Book of filial piety) as required reading for everyone in the empire. He praised the government's practice of selecting its officials from among filial sons, and denounced as utterly immoral the Former Han court's numerous attempts to reduce the family mourning obligation of its officials and of the general population; he suggested that the three-year mourning period stipulated in the Confucian classics must be strictly observed. He argued:

There first must be the husband and wife, then the father and son [relationship] comes into existence. Once there are fathers and sons, the ruler and subject [relationship] comes into existence.

Family relationships and obligations thus took precedence over political obligations and public duties. A famous anecdote mentions that once Hsün Shuang was asked to comment on noteworthy personalities of his home commandery, and his commendation did not go beyond the members of his own family; when he was reprimanded for this, he argued that it was natural for one to think of the nearest of kin and that it was immoral to reverse the natural order. Another famous saying of Hsün Shuang, later quoted in a letter by the ruler of the state of Wu, held that one should follow the direction of one's heart and respond to others in a strictly reciprocal fashion; that is, "to love only those who love me and to hate all those who hate me."[98] If this principle were to be taken to its extreme conclusion, there could be no impersonal value or objective principle in the human world.

At the other extreme were those who were troubled by the upheavals and followed the Legalistic approach in supporting state power, bureaucratic administration, impersonal law, and severe measures against intellectual dissent and political opponents. These were the experts in statecraft, whose service was indispensable to rulers of the regional states in their efforts to control marauding soldiers or defiant local leaders in a difficult time of endemic civil war. Within the regional states, the schism between the Legalist assertion of power and order and the Taoist demand for freedom and autonomy thus continued to upset the uneasy alliance of the scholar-official bureaucrats and the local landlords and powerful clans.[99] To prevent a further breakdown of the alliance, the old Confucian appeal for harmony

98 *Shih-shuo hsin-yü* (SPPY ed.) 1A, p. 15 (Richard B. Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü: A new account of tales of the world* [Minneapolis, 1976], p. 29). *Wei-lüeh*, quoted in the commentary to *San-kuo chih* 13 (Wei 13), p. 396 note 2.

99 Chen, *Life and reflections*, pp. 56–65, 163f.

and compromise needed to be periodically evoked, as it was in the writings of Hsün Yüeh (A.D. 148–209), the last of the great Later Han thinkers.

Hsün Yüeh: human limitations and the approximation to truth

A nephew of Hsün Shuang, Hsün Yüeh served as the inspector of the imperial library (*pi-shu chien*) and palace attendant (*shih-chung*) of the Later Han figurehead Hsien-ti from A.D. 190 to 209 and produced two major works, the *Han chi* or *Ch'ien-Han chi* (Chronicles of the Former Han dynasty) and the *Shen-chien* (Extended reflections). In his writings, Hsün Yüeh tried to reconcile the conflict between public order and personal morality, between universalist and particularist interests, and between idealistic vision and practical strategy, employing a synthesis of Legalist, Taoist, and various other strains of Later Han thought.

Hsün Yüeh accepted the Han Confucian concept of an ultimate truth as the Way that transcends heaven, earth, and the human world. But he tended to emphasize the variety of forms that the Way takes in the different spheres of heaven, earth, and man. These forms vary within the human world, according to time and place, in view of the differences between changing and changeless, the past as fact, the present as realization, and the future as potential.[100] He elaborated on the distinction between external events and the internal mind, between judgment of events by environmental factors and judgment of personal actions by intention or consequence. He discussed the faculties of the mind – intellect, will, and emotion; as well as the problem of knowledge and its expression in language.

According to Hsün Yüeh, there might be a transcendent Way in a holistic universe, but it was doubtful whether this could be understood adequately by man or communicated through writing. Hsün Yüeh thus strongly opposed simplistic and dogmatic thinking. He wrote:[101]

> One must comprehend the law of nature and examine the nature of men; peruse the canonical classics but check them against the recorded events of past and present; take heed of the variegated conditions of humanity and penetrate into the subtlest details; avoid the extreme and grasp the mean; take reference from the Five Elements of cosmic mutations; syncretize all these in different hypothetical patterns and sequences; then one may dimly envisage an approximation of truth.

He professed that an approximation of truth and perfection was the best that man could accomplish in reality, even though it was still desirable for him to aim at ideal perfection.

100 *Ch'ien-Han chi* 6, p. 6a; Ch'en, *Hsün Yüeh and the mind of late Han China*, pp. 89f.
101 *Ch'ien-Han chi* 6, p. 5a.

With the justification of his idea of "approximate truth," Hsün Yüeh upheld Confucius as the sage who had envisaged the true Way but had been unable to transmit his knowledge in clear or simple terms. According to this view, Confucianism as espoused by Mencius and Hsün Ch'ing would then be only an approximation of the Way of Confucius, and Han Confucianism was in turn only an approximation of this classic Confucianism. Nevertheless, it was the most valuable tradition, partly because its opponents could do no better; as Hsün Yüeh intimated, many of the critiques of Confucianism in Later Han times were more simplistically conceived than the Confucian ideas they deprecated. Hsün Yüeh thus defended Confucian orthodoxy with utter sophistry. But he also justified the need for flexibility and the possibility of reinterpretation. Since the true Way of Confucius was as remote as ever, and even the Five Classics were but an imperfect exposition of the Way, no orthodoxy could be infallible and every generation of Confucians should renew the effort to attain an approximation of the Way.

With equal sophistry, Hsün Yüeh upheld the imperial order as a symbol of political unity with profound cosmic and moral meaning, as attested in history and sanctified in the canonical classics. But it was only the symbol that was perfect, inviolable, and unchanging. In reality, any political order could be only an approximation of the ideal; all governments could be corrupted, and no dynasty could last forever. The emperor, mindful of the symbolic sanctity of his position, should not compromise it as a principle. As an individual, he should strive toward moral and intellectual perfection; as the occupant of the throne, he should observe all the appropriate rituals but exercise his authority only within the preserve of inviolable imperial sovereignty. Actual governance often involves conflicting interests and attitudes, adjusting policies according to changing times, and compromise between ideal and reality. Since such issues impinge on the symbolic sanctity of the throne, Hsün Yüeh argued, the task of government should best be left to officials.

By separating the ideal from reality, Hsün Yüeh was able to profess his loyalty to the Han dynasty while criticizing the policies and personal conduct of the Han emperors, and to support officialdom while censuring many individual officials. He remained highly sympathetic toward the elite's feeling of dissatisfaction, their protest and defiance, and their quest for spiritual freedom and moral autonomy. But he denounced their extreme partisanship and their unruly activities, their exploitation of the poor, and their responsibility for the erosion of the empire's political unity. He was Confucian in his approach to scholarship, Taoistic in his relativistic view of reality, and Legalistic in his pragmatic approach toward politics, while finding fault with Confucian learning, Taoist practice, and Legalist statecraft.

In a sense, it may be said that Hsün Yüeh tended to find fault with reality as such. He was seeking a kind of learning and a level of truth that were beyond human capacity. As a historian and a political thinker, he was well aware of the cumulative problems of the Later Han that frustrated any solution. As an attendant of the figurehead last Han emperor, Hsün Yüeh was well aware of the impending catastrophe, the fall of the empire, but was powerless to avert it. In his writings he offered the lessons of history, his relections on a myriad of problems, and his vision of perfection not so much for the benefit of his contemporaries as for the benefit of future generations, in whose time he hoped the realm would be changed for the better.

THE VALUE OF LATER HAN THOUGHT

From the start of the Christian era to the first decades of the third century, the Han empire passed through a complete cycle; this ran from the fall of Former Han, through the restoration and vicissitudes of Later Han, to the collapse of Later Han. The attitude of Han thinkers went through its own evolution: from Yang Hsiung's enthusiasm for Wang Mang's Hsin dynasty and his confidence in the superiority of human intelligence to Hsün Yüeh's apology for the imperial order and Confucianism and his pessimistic view of reality. Confined as they were by the political structures of a decaying empire, these thinkers may be faulted for their failure to offer a grandiose vision of universal appeal, or to provide an effective and long-range remedy for the cumulative ills of the Han dynasty. They also failed to construct a scheme of speculative, abstract thinking concerning those universal problems and categories which had attracted so much of their predecessors' attention. But if the human spirit is valued for its ability to grasp reality, or for its capacity for self-criticism, later Han thinkers demonstrated an extraordinary sensitivity to the particular predicaments of their age, with attention to its variegated details and an anguished foresight into its tragic consequences. They had the courage and integrity to criticize the imperial power and Confucian orthodoxy, and to go against the interests of their own group.

The strength of the Legalist tradition lies in its practical approach to problems of the state and public interest; its shortcoming lies in the advocacy of dictatorial power for the ruler and a subservient obedience by subjects. The value of the Taoist tradition lies in its vision of transcendence, of spiritual freedom, and its defiance of earthly power and gain; its weakness lies in its aloofness from worldly problems and the nihilism and escapism it encourages. The merits and demerits of Confucianism are more

varied and numerous, as is evidenced by the survey in this chapter, which covers only the two-hundred-year history of Later Han Confucianism. Confucianism, even in its declining phase during the Later Han, revealed a comprehensive flexibility which may be considered its vital strength as well as its basic weakness.

The flexibility of Confucianism lies in its complex humanistic concern. Ever since Confucius had called for special attention to them, certain questions have never ceased to interest Confucians, while humanity has remained as intractable as ever. These questions concern the meaning and the ideal of humanity, the moral or amoral nature of man, man's potential for cultivation and reform, and man's manifold predicament in the spiritual, moral, social, political, and economic realms. These complex problems called for a wide range of approaches, pragmatic or idealistic, general or particular; and they evoked a variety of attitudes, optimistic or pessimistic, engagement or withdrawal. The spectrum thus encompasses both the Legalistic and the Taoistic strains of thought. The Confucian ideal of harmony and the mean, and its counsel of compromise and tolerance, though less grandiose, was proper to its task.

Later Han thought lacked the creative grandeur of classical and early Han thought, but it subsumed more experience and wisdom. The thinkers of the classical age and early Han had laid the intellectual foundation for an emerging imperium, but had anticipated neither the cumulative problems of an ossifying regime nor the implications of their ideas when tested by reality and transformed into dogmas.

A number of dilemmas confronted Later Han thinkers, such as those of autonomy and dependence, permanence and change, or the conflicts between self and society or state, between superiority and popularity, or between sagehood and rulership. These conflicts were inhibited by basic considerations, such as the bureaucratic bias of Legalism, the individual and communal roots of Taoism, and the familial orientation of Confucianism. Such were the differences that became crystallized in Later Han times and continued to engage the Chinese mind in post-Han times.

CHAPTER 16

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION FROM HAN TO SUI

The collapse of the Han dynasty during the second and third centuries A.D., together with the political, social, and economic troubles that it brought about, resulted in a period of intellectual ferment unequaled in Chinese history except at the end of the Chou period (fourth to third centuries B.C.), the end of the Ming dynasty (sixteenth to seventeenth centuries A.D.), and the revolutions of the twentieth century. During that period certain basic philosophical concepts were evolved that were to be essential to later Chinese thought and to mark it indelibly. When Buddhism was introduced about the beginning of our era and began, from the fourth century onward, to penetrate into the educated elite, it accentuated these changes while at the same time altering their emphasis. Buddhism was adapted to the Chinese mind by a slow process in which it was mingled with and grafted onto Taoism, and it was to dominate "medieval" China until the end of the first millennium.

THE DECLINE OF PHILOSOPHY DURING LATER HAN

The Ch'in and Han dynasties had made China into a unified empire. It had been necessary to introduce a method of centralizing power, and a system of order and authority based on a highly structured administrative and military machine; its ideology had to be essentially pragmatic, somewhat like that of imperial Rome. The metaphysical and mystical tendencies of Taoism and the varied speculations in which older schools of the pre-imperial era had indulged were laid aside in favor of Confucianism. Confucianism is a doctrine of this world, a sociology, and also a cosmology that links man to the universe through the heaven-earth-man triad, yet pays little attention to the ultramundane realms of the supernatural. The Son of Heaven is the link between heaven and earth; man, his subject, has merely to keep to

This chapter has been translated from Professor Demiéville's original French text by Francesca Bray. The postscript, by Dr. Timothy Barrett, has been added in order to bring to the reader's attention the results of research published since Professor Demiéville's death in 1979.

his appointed place in the machinery of the state, of which the emperor forms the hub.

In 124 B.C. Wu-ti founded the Academy (T'ai-hsüeh), where academicians (*po-shih*) taught future officials the orthodox doctrines of state; these were based on the canonical books of antiquity, the Five Classics (*wu-ching*) that were linked by tradition with the name of Confucius. Other schools supplemented the imperial college in the commanderies. In principle, each teacher taught only one classic, and only one interpretation of it at that.[1]

These interpretations were in no way literal, but consisted largely of cosmological theories, which are known to us principally through Tung Chung-shu (ca. 179–104 B.C.). Tung Chung-shu propounded a system of micro-macrocosmic correspondences that enable the future to be foretold. These included correlations between *yin* and *yang*, between left and right, and between the Five Elements, the five notes of the pentatonic scale, the seasons, the points of the compass, the five colors and the five flavors, the organs of the body, and other numerological categories.[2] At that time there was current a large number of works that may be classified as oracular prognostication (*ch'an*), and apocryphal writings (*wei* or "wefts"); these latter consisted of commentaries on the canonical texts themselves (*ching* or "warps"). Western sinologists refer to both types of texts as Han apocrypha; their esoteric character is illustrated by the tradition that Tung Chung-shu used to teach hidden behind a curtain.[3] In the *ch'an* and *wei* literature Confucius is transfigured as a "king without attributes" (*su-wang*: a king without the actual insignia of royalty) who did not reign, but who nevertheless had received the Mandate of Heaven (*t'ien-ming*) to reform the world. Official Han philosophy was restricted to speculation on a relatively low level such as this.

This does not mean, however, that Taoist thought was entirely neglected, at least at the beginning of Han, when there were those who attempted to draw a political doctrine with practical applications from Lao-tzu. It is said that Wen-ti (r. 180–157 B.C.) and Ching-ti (r. 157–

1 Henri Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese religion*, trans. Frank A. Kierman, Jr. (Amherst, Mass., 1981), pp. 58f.

2 For Tung Chung-shu, see Woo Kang, *Les trois théories politiques du Tchouen Ts'ieou interpretées par Tong Tchong-chou* (Paris, 1932); and Chapter 12, pp. 708f., and note 147. For the correlation of the Five Elements, see Joseph Needham, *Science and civilisation in China* (Cambridge, 1954–), Vol. II, pp. 261f.

3 For these texts, see Tjan Tjoe Som, *Po hu t'ung: The comprehensive discussion in the White Tiger Hall* (Leiden, 1949, 1952), pp. 100–20; Fung Yu-lan, *A history of Chinese philosophy* (London and Princeton, 1952), Vol. II, pp. 88f.; and Jack L. Dull, "A historical introduction to the apocryphal (*ch'an-wei*) texts of the Han dynasty," Diss. Univ. of Washington, 1966; and Chapter 14 above, p. 759.

141), who reigned just before Wu-ti (141–87), ruled according to the principle of quiescence (*wu-wei*) propounded by Lao-tzu. These two rulers were, respectively, the husband and son of empress Tou (d. 135 B.C., better known by her title of empress dowager, Tou *t'ai-hou*), who herself was Taoist-minded. Under her influence, the two emperors also became Taoists.[4] Taoism of a rather popular form was regarded with much favor in the Han harem among the empresses and concubines of plebeian origin, and several empresses are reputed to have been adherents of this persuasion. Even the founder of the dynasty, Kao-ti (r. 206–195 B.C.), let a Taoist, Chang Liang (d. 187 B.C.), persuade him to adopt a policy of pliancy and apparent humility; Wu-ti himself, who first established the official Confucian orthodoxy, would resort to Taoist magicians or intermediaries (*fang-shih*) to prolong his life.

In Han texts Lao-tzu is often associated with the Yellow Emperor, Huang-ti, under the name of Huang-Lao. The Yellow Emperor was a mythical figure dating back to primeval times who later became the patron of the occult sciences and of medicine; writings that are now mainly lost, and that seem partly to have resembled those of Lao-tzu, are attributed to him by Han bibliographers.[5] Such an association paved the way for the deification of Lao-tzu. When either Lao-tzu or Huang-Lao is mentioned in Han texts, it is generally in connection with some question of morality or politics, or else with techniques of longevity; in brief, with practical matters rather than with philosophical doctrines proper.

Chuang-tzu, the greatest ancient Taoist philosopher, appears rarely in such texts. He is eclipsed by Lao-tzu, and hardly seems to have been read even in educated circles, let alone among the lower classes of society where Taoist beliefs (of which, however, we know very little) prevailed. Chuang-tzu was too intellectual, too dialectical, and too literary for a period such as Han, when action took precedence over thought. Although the work that bears Chuang-tzu's name is a vast composite corpus of essays of widely varying dates and contents, it is mostly preoccupied with philosophical matters.[6]

In Han texts Chuang-tzu is almost always associated with Lao-tzu and more or less subordinate to him. Chapter 33 of the *Chuang-tzu*, "the world" ("T'ien-hsia"), gives a critical picture of the various philosophical opinions of the ancient world, and is probably one of the very latest parts of the

4 *Han shu* 52, p. 2379; *HS* 88, pp. 3592–93; *HS* 97A, p. 3945.
5 *HS* 30, pp. 1765, 1767, 1772, 1776. For newly found texts which derive from Huang-Lao thought, see Chapter 12 above, p. 694.
6 See A.C. Graham, *Chuang-tzu: The seven inner chapters and other writings from the book* Chuang-tzu (London, 1981).

work. In it, Chuang-tzu's ideas are set out just after those of Lao-tzu, and are presented as utopian rather than practical. Even as early as the third century B.C., the philosopher Hsün Ch'ing reproached Chuang-tzu with being "so clouded over by Heaven that he knew nothing of man," and in the *Shih-chi* Chuang-tzu is mentioned after Lao-tzu as a mere epigone.[7] According to Ssu-ma Ch'ien, he illustrated Lao-tzu's doctrines with brilliantly written fables, but his high-flown rhetoric was of no use to the rulers of the world. Yet Ssu-ma Ch'ien, like his father Ssu-ma T'an, has sometimes been accused of Taoist heresy. A century later, at the transition between Former and Later Han, Yang Hsiung (53 B.C.–A.D. 18) drew his inspiration from Lao-tzu for his *T'ai-hsüan ching* (Classic of the great mystery); but he also lumps Chuang-tzu with Yang Chu as a "fomenter of disorder and enemy of the laws."[8]

Toward the end of the second century B.C., however, Chuang-tzu was still well known among a group of literary men gathered at his court by the king of Huai-nan, a grandson of the founder of the dynasty and an imperial prince who was bent on secession from the central establishment. Chuang-tzu is often quoted in the collection of essays that these men compiled under the title of *Huai-nan-tzu* (139 B.C.). The king of Huai-nan, like his cousin, the king of Ho-chien (d. 130 B.C.), was a great collector of old books, and among these were certainly recensions of the text of the *Chuang-tzu*. But these must gradually have become more rare, as may be learned from the biographical notes on the Pan family.[9] A cousin and fellow scholar of Pan Piao named Pan Ssu had inherited from his father Pan Yu (d. 2 B.C.) a manuscript of the *Chuang-tzu* that had been given to him by Ch'eng-ti (r. 33–7 B.C.), together with various other books on philosophy termed "secret." We shall see what is meant by this term.

Pan Yu had played an active part in the work of collection and classification of the imperial library that took place at the end of Former Han. In this way he won the favor of Ch'eng-ti and received these books which, we are told, were not commonly circulated at the time. The commentary explains this to mean that they never left the imperial library. The *Han shu* adds a further detail. Toward the beginning of his reign, Ch'eng-ti had refused to allow one of his own uncles to see the "philosophers' books," because one of his counsellors judged them to be dangerous to Confucian orthodoxy; this was the reason for using the term "secret."[10] Another passage of the *Han shu* shows us that we must number the *Chuang-tzu*

7 *Hsün-tzu* 21 ("Chieh-pi"), p. 291; *Shih-chi* 63, pp. 2143f.

8 In the title *T'ai-hsüan ching*, the term *hsüan* is derived from Lao-tzu; see *Fa-yen*, which is modeled on the *Analects* of Confucius, 8, p. 5b (*SPPY* ed.).

9 *HS* 100A, pp. 4203, 4205. 10 *HS* 80, pp. 3324f.

among these books. Pan Ssu, who inherited the books, esteemed the doctrines of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu most highly of all, though not neglecting his Confucian studies, and we know that he must have been familiar with the *Chuang-tzu*. In a reply to Huan T'an (ca. 43 B.C.–A.D. 28), bibliophile and owner of a famous library, who asked him to lend him his books, Pan Ssu refused haughtily, saying that he would take care never to lend them to a Confucian who knew nothing of the teachings of Chuang-tzu. "If you were like Chuang-tzu," he said,[11]

who abolished saintliness and rejected intelligence so as to cultivate vitality and preserve his integrity; who applied himself to the pure void and to ataraxic calmness so as to return to what is natural; who remained solitary, his only master and friend being the creative evolution of nature; and who never put himself at the service of his time . . . who was neither trapped in the nets of the [Confucian] saints nor tempted by the lures of tyrannical rulers, and who lived at his ease, so free that one knows not what to call him – then you would be worthy of my respect. . . .

Thus, toward the beginning of Later Han the libertarian philosophy of Chuang-tzu had found an adept from a highly cultured milieu who guarded its secret jealously, keeping to himself the text that had now become so rare. It was the same story for the texts of most philosophers of antiquity, with the exception of Lao-tzu, so that the revival of their thought in the third century A.D. also constituted a textual revival.

About a hundred years after Pan Ssu, Ma Jung (79–166), the great exegete who did so much to give new life to the interpretation of the Confucian classics by eliminating the extravagant theories taught in the official schools, was censored by orthodox purists as being a Taoist.[12] He had indeed written commentaries on the *Lao-tzu* and the *Huai-nan-tzu*, and it is said that at the beginning of his career, having refused a post that he had been offered "because he did not like it," he withdrew to a frontier region. Barbarian incursions, however, happened to cause a famine, and he eventually decided to accept the post so as not to starve to death. He explained to his friends that renunciation of one's life because of some petty humiliation would have gone against "what Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu say"; and he alluded to a passage in the *Chuang-tzu*[13] that deals with men who refuse supreme power and decline rank and honor in order to remain alive to cultivate the *tao*.

In Ma Jung's day, educated men, even those who were Confucians, were beginning to refuse to be involved in public affairs as Confucianism de-

11 *HS* 100A, p. 4205.
12 *Hou-Han shu* 60A, p. 1953; Mieczysław Jerzy Künstler, *Ma Jong: Vie et oeuvre* (Warsaw, 1969), pp. 28–29, 37–38. 13 See *Chuang-tzu* 28 ("Jang wang"), pp. 76f.

manded, and were becoming immersed in their inner life. They had philosophical and religious preoccupations that found appropriate stimulus in the work of Chuang-tzu. There were several reasons and precedents for these new tendencies, which were to restore Chuang-tzu to a place of honor. The Confucian bonds had already begun to burst with Wang Ch'ung (ca. A.D. 27–100) who, in his *Lun-heng*, launched a campaign against the misuses and inconsistencies in the interpretation of the Five Classics as taught in the official schools. Such exegesis had given rise to downright scholasticism. We are told that in the commentaries of Former Han, now lost, sometimes as many as twenty or thirty thousand characters were used to gloss a passage of five characters.[14]

At the beginning of the second century A.D., the lexicographer Hsü Shen found it easy to point out some of the inherent difficulties in his *Wu-ching i-i* (Divergences of meaning among the Five Classics). Ma Jung and his disciple, Cheng Hsüan (127–200), tried to save the tradition by commenting on the classics as a whole, in an attempt to derive a coherent doctrine, rather than on each one separately, as was the official way. These men were the last great exegetes of the classics before the Confucian revival of Sung, a thousand years later, and the opportunity may be taken to stress the importance of exegesis in the history of Confucianism. The history of Confucianism is the history of the exegesis of the classics, just as that of Christianity is the history of biblical exegesis; the same is also true of Buddhism.

But the attempts at reform made by exegetes in the second century A.D. could not save Han Confucianism from the disgrace that threatened it. During the same period virulent attacks, such as the *Ch'ien-fu lun* (Discourses of a recluse) by Wang Fu (ca. 90–165), or the *Cheng-lun* (On the administration) by Ts'ui Shih (d. 170), are proof of the aggressive attitude of the literati toward Confucian orthodoxy.[15] Throughout the second century the contest between the ancient text (*ku-wen*) and the modern text (*chin-wen*) defenders of the classics helped to undermine the foundations of Confucian orthodoxy. Manuscripts of the classics written in old characters—that is, in a script used before Han, were alleged to have been found, and the comparison of these texts with Han versions, taken from oral tradition and written in contemporary script, soon led to a controversy about the doctrinal interpretation of the classics.

The supporters of the ancient texts objected to the extrapolations made

14 *HS* 30, p. 1723 (Tjan, *Po hu t'ung*, Vol. I, p. 143); and see Chapter 14 above, p. 758.
15 See Étienne Balazs, "Political philosophy and social crisis at the end of the Han dynasty," in his *Chinese civilization and bureaucracy: Variations on a theme* (New Haven and London, 1964), pp. 198f., 205f.

in the official exegesis and denied the quasi-deification of Confucius and the miracles that were attributed to him. As early as A.D. 79 a conference on the classics had been held at the imperial palace, and the records have survived to the present day.[16] The supporters of the modern school had triumphed over those, more advanced in their views, of the ancient school. A century later, the second school had the commentators Ma Jung and Cheng Hsüan on its side, and it was destined to make a brilliant showing during the philosophical revival of the third century.[17]

In order to place this great revival in its historical context, it is necessary to discuss at some length the ideological conditions that paved its way during the Han period. In politics, the fall of the dynasty had begun with intrigues in the imperial harem and the rise to power of the eunuchs; both developments were recurrent evils.[18] From the end of the first century A.D. onward the emperors were mere children or pawns in the hands of clans that were related to the empresses regent, and fighting each other for power. The eunuchs, being plebeian in origin, enlisted the support of the rising class of businessmen and of rich profiteers to rout the great landed families and the aristocrats who represented their interests at court. The men of letters joined together against the regime in an attempt to defend their monopoly of the administration.

From 165 onward, Empress Tou became regent. Like her namesake in Former Han, she was inclined toward Taoism. Her father, Tou Wu, opposed the eunuchs, but the empress hesitated. Her father was put to death in 168; she was removed from power, and the eunuchs triumphed. They hunted down the men of letters and sent them back to their provincial homes, where they were condemned to idleness. This was the famous proscription of the partisans (*tang-ku*, 166–184),[19] followed by a coup d'état by Yüan Shao, who massacred the eunuchs in 189, only to be assassinated himself three years later. The true winners were the military, who rushed to the capital to seize what advantages they could, and then contended over the leadership by means of a series of pronouncements.

The whole empire was thrown into disorder. Power was in the hands of the military; the administration disintegrated; and the peasants, poverty-stricken, took to roaming the countryside. Then in 184 came the great Taoist uprisings: the Yellow Turbans in the east and the Five Pecks of Grain in the west. The proscription of the partisans was formally lifted in the face of this new peril. Many military men won merit during the suppression of these rebellions, as for example Tung Cho, who in the coup

16 For the significance of this incident, see Tjan, *Po hu t'ung*; and Chapter 14 above, pp. 763f.
17 See pp. 826f. below. 18 See Chapter 3 above, pp. 287f.; Chapter 5, pp. 317f., 341f.
19 See Chapter 5 above, pp. 327f.

immediately following that of Yüan Shao sacked Lo-yang in 190, and destroyed the Han archives and the imperial library. But it was left to one of the most spectacular figures in Chinese history, Ts'ao Ts'ao (155–220), to deliver the coup de grace to the Han dynasty.

Ts'ao Ts'ao was a man of obscure origins, a great poet, a great strategist, and also a realistic political thinker who rebelled against the ritual and moral constraints of Confucianism. Immediately after his death in 220, his son Ts'ao P'i founded the Wei dynasty (220–264), which claimed to succeed the Han dynasty in central China. Two other states, however, shared the rest of the country: Shu in the west, in Szechuan (221–263); and Wu in the south, with its capital first at Wu-ch'ang and then at the later city of Nanking (222–280). This is the period known as the Three Kingdoms (*San-kuo*).

POPULAR TAOISM AT THE END OF THE HAN DYNASTY

In the midst of the upheavals of the end of the Han dynasty, the long-concealed layer of popular Taoism rose to the surface in a series of rebellions that broke out in 184. This was a year marked by the start of a new cycle, according to the enumeration of years by the sexagenary series.[20] The rebellions were inspired by Taoist utopias, and were the forerunners of all the peasant revolts and secret societies that were periodically to challenge the abuses of Confucian government. Similar revolts, led by men who proclaimed themselves emperor and assumed a religious role, are mentioned from the middle of the second century, but the historians give us no information as to the religious beliefs which inspired them. In 184 two different movements sprang up within a few months of each other: the Yellow Turbans (*huang-chin*) and the Five Pecks of Grain (*wu-tou-mi*). The former took their name from the yellow turbans or caps that they wore (yellow was the color of the Yellow Emperor, Huang-ti, whom they took, along with Lao-tzu, as their patron); the latter were so called because they were each obliged to give a certain amount of grain to provide for the community, and in particular for the gratuitous houses (*i-she*) where adepts were lodged and fed during their wanderings or their periods of retreat.

The Yellow Turbans were centered in the east, especially in the coastal regions, where religious feelings had always run high; the Five Pecks of Grain arose in the west, in Szechwan and the borders of Shensi. The leaders of both movements were called Chang, but the two families do not seem to have been related. In the east there were three leaders named Chang (*san*

20 For this series, see Chapter 12 above, p. 687.

Chang): Chang Chüeh and his two brothers, Chang Liang and Chang Pao, whose activities had been growing more and more intense for a decade, but who were defeated and killed, with Ts'ao Ts'ao's help, by the end of 184. In the west there were also three Changs, apparently without any blood ties with those in the east: Chang Ling, later known as Chang Tao-ling, whose historicity is not certain, but from whom the pontiffs of the Taoist church were later to trace their line of descent; his son Chang Heng, hardly more historical; and his grandson Chang Lu. In addition there was one Chang Hsiu, who may well have been the true founder of the movement, but who is supposed to have been put to death by Chang Lu. It seems that Chang Lu's aim was not so much to supplant the imperial system of power as to reform it. He managed to remain at the head of a vast political and religious community until 215, when he ended up by joining Ts'ao Ts'ao, who ennobled him and gave him in marriage a member of his own family. But by the end of 184 the Yellow Turbans leaders had all been killed, and the movement managed only sporadic twitches thereafter. It was from the Three Changs of the west, not those of the east, that later Taoist tradition was to claim its foundation.

The differences between these two movements were considerable enough for some scholars to regard them as quite different movements, one much more truly "Taoist" than the other.[21] But in reality, despite differences in detail on which the sources are not always clear, there was an obvious structural analogy that permits us to consider them together.[22] It is sometimes said that the Yellow Turbans followed the Way of the Great Peace (*t'ai-p'ing tao*), while the rebels in the west followed the Way of the Celestial Master (*t'ien-shih tao*); but the title of Celestial Masters was known in the east, and the utopia of the Great Peace was a goal shared by both movements. In the west the rebels recited the "five thousand words" of Lao-tzu, the repetition of which was supposed to have magical powers. However, the so-called *Hsiang-erh chu* (Hsiang-erh commentary) found at Tun-huang, which is generally attributed to Chang Lu, gives an interpretation of the *Lao-tzu* text that is concerned principally with morality.[23] In the east they preferred to refer to the so-called *T'ai-p'ing ching* (Book of the

21 See Paul Michaud, "The Yellow Turbans," *MS*, 17 (1958), 79–86.

22 See Rolf A. Stein, "Remarques sur les mouvements du taoïsme politico-religieux au IIe siècle ap. J.C.," *TP*, 50 (1963), 5.

23 See Jao Tsung-i, *Lao-tzu Hsiang-erh chu chiao-chien* (Hong Kong, 1956); Anna K. Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu dans le taoïsme des Han* (Paris, 1969), pp. 75–80; Yoshioka Yoshitoyo, *Eisei e no negai: Dōkyō* (Tokyo, 1970), pp. 50–53. For the term *hsiang-erh* (think thus), which seems to have been applied to exercises in meditation and became the name of an immortal, see Jao Tsung-i, "Lao-tzu Hsiang-erh chu hsü lun," in *Fukui Hakushi shōju kinen Tōyō bunka ronshū* (Tokyo, 1969). See also William G. Boltz, "The religious and philosophical significance of the 'Hsiang Erh' *Lao-tzu* in the light of the *Ma-wang-tui* silk manuscripts," *BSOAS*, 45:1 (1982), 95–117.

great peace). Perhaps the main difference is that in the west the rebels were mixed with the aboriginal, non-Chinese inhabitants of the region, who may have had a certain influence on the ideas and practices of the adepts of the Five Pecks of Grain.

In both cases, the ideas and practices took their inspiration from a theocratic messianism, the origins of which may be traced back to the end of Former Han, when a man from Shantung presented to Ch'eng-ti (r. 33–7 B.C.) a *Book of the great peace* that was supposed to have been revealed by the Heavenly Sovereign (*t'ien-ti*) in order to renew the mandate of the Han dynasty.[24] In 5 B.C. his successor Ai-ti (r. 7–1 B.C.), whose life was threatened by illness, took the title Emperor of the Great Peace (*T'ai-p'ing huang-ti*). The utopia of the Great Peace, adopted later by the Yellow Turbans, thus had claims to antiquity. It was also adopted later by Buddhist rebels, and again in the nineteenth century by the would-be Christian T'ai-p'ing rebels.[25]

As to the version of the *Book of the great peace* that served as scriptural authority for the Yellow Turbans, it was supposed to have been revealed before the middle of the second century A.D. by one Kan Chi (or Yü Chi), who came from Lang-yeh (Shantung, another home of the Yellow Turbans); a manuscript of the book in 170 rolls (*chüan*) had been presented to Shun-ti (r. 125–144). Only a few quotations, however, remain of this vast Han version. One fragment, and a table of contents, have been discovered among the Tun-huang manuscripts, but in a version that could not date from earlier than the end of the sixth century.[26] In any case, this version is unlikely to agree with the original text, for it is full of allusion to and borrowings from Buddhism. It is probable that the forty-seven rolls of the *T'ai-p'ing ching* included in the Taoist canon (*Tao-tsang*) of the Ming period also derive from this Six Dynasties version.[27] What little it is possible for us to grasp from the text seems to show that this particular work, like the so-called *Lao-tzu*, stressed the moral aspects of the doctrine. It recommends filial piety, obedience, and loyalty; but it also contains advice on the magical cure of disease; on the practices aimed at "nourishing life" and "sloughing the corpse" so as to go to Heaven at the moment of death;[28] and

24 *HS* 75, p. 3192; Michael Loewe, *Crisis and conflict in Han China* (London, 1974), pp. 278f.

25 Some have understood *t'ai-p'ing* to mean "great equality," but this interpretation would seem to be anachronistic; see Balazs, "Political philosophy and social crisis," p. 192.

26 Vincent Y. C. Shih, "Some Chinese rebel ideologies," *TP*, 44 (1956), 150–226.

27 Bibliography on the *T'ai-p'ing ching* may be found in Balazs, "Political philosophy and social crisis," p. 193 note 5; and in Henri Maspero and Étienne Balazs, *Histoire et institutions de la Chine ancienne* (Paris, 1967), p. 90 note 2. See also *Revue bibliographique de sinologie*, 6 (1960), no. 593; Fukui Kōjun, *Dōkyō no kisoteki kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1952), pp. 214–55; and Yoshioka, *Eisei e no negai: Dōkyō*, pp. 415–48.

28 That is, *yang-sheng* and *shih-chieh* (as a cicada sloughs its skin).

on exercises in meditation designed to "preserve the One" (*shou-i*). This latter expression was adopted by the Buddhists to translate the Sanskrit *samādhi* (mental concentration).

The Taoist communities of the late Han period were organized in a military, administrative, and religious framework. The community in the east was divided into thirty-six districts under a district head (*fang*, a term that was also applied to those who know magic prescriptions) who had the power to cure the sick. In the west there were twenty-four sections (*pu*), or governments (*chih*), with "libationers" (*chi-chiu*) at their head, an old term used in lay society for the chief notable who presided at local banquets and was the first to make an offering of wine. It then became an official title in Han administrative nomenclature.[29] The penal law had a religious character, and illness, as in *Erewhon*, was considered the punishment for a sin, to be expiated by public confession, good deeds, and withdrawal – or enclosure – in "houses of quiet" (*ching-she*), where those who were guilty reflected on their faults. The faithful were classed as fathers and mothers of the *tao*, boys and girls of the *tao* (*tao-fu*, *tao-mu*, *tao-nan*, *tao-nü*).

The three leaders of the west named Chang called themselves Celestial Masters (*t'ien-shih*); they regarded themselves as the representatives on earth of Lao-tzu, who was deified as a counsellor and teacher of the Son of Heaven. In the east, Chang Chüeh had taken the title of Yellow Heaven (*huang-t'ien*), which seems to indicate that he aspired to imperial dignity; alternatively he used the title General of the Heavens (*t'ien-kung chiang-chün*), while his two brothers were known as the Earthly General (*ti-kung chiang-chün*) and the General of Mankind (*jen-kung chiang-chün*), in accordance with the ancient formula of the cosmic triad. Many of the institutions of the Han rebels were preserved in medieval times when the Taoist community organized itself as a church, following the example of the Buddhist community.

It has been suggested that certain beliefs and practices of these rebels may show the influence of Buddhism, which was introduced into China at about that time. Thus the confession of sins; the exhortation to good deeds (such as almsgiving, supporting orphans and the poor); or the undertaking of works for the public good, were all actions that Buddhism recommended in the category of gifts (*dāna*). Other features considered in this way include abstention from, or at least moderation in, the drinking of alcohol; and the legend of the immaculate conception of Lao-tzu and his birth from his mother's right side, although this legend is first attested only in the

29 For the use of this term in official institutions, see Hans Bielenstein, *The bureaucracy of Han times* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 14, 15, 17, 23, 60, 98, 102.

fourth century. Similarly the idea of Lao-tzu's apparitional transformations (*pien-hua*) might well have taken their inspiration from the metamorphic bodies (*hua-shen*, *nirmāṇa-kāya*) of the Buddha.

But the dating of our sources is so uncertain that it is difficult to reach a firm decision; most specialists tend to cast doubt on any borrowing from Buddhism.[30] However, it would be surprising if the great crowds of Taoist believers had had no contact whatsoever with the large numbers of Buddhist converts described to us elsewhere as existing in 194 in the northeast of the land of Ch'u, at P'eng-ch'eng in the heart of Yellow Turban country. These Buddhists worshipped both Buddha and Huang-lao.[31] In any case, the Taoist movements must have prepared large numbers of Chinese to accept and uphold a religious community independent of the state such as the Buddhist *saṅgha* was to become.

Yet another strange foreign element is presented in the utopia of the Great Peace, which recalls in several ways the mythical representation in China of the Roman Empire. In Chinese writings this is called Ta-Ch'in, "the great[er] China," a term that is akin to "Asia Major." The Chinese pictured this as an exotic Land of Cockaigne through a process of idealization born of ignorance that was often paralleled in Western ideas of China. At the end of Han the Taoists seem to have contributed to the elaboration or enrichment of this picture of the utopia of Ta-Ch'in.[32]

The messiah of the Great Peace was none other than the deified Lao-tzu. He was worshipped by the rebels in the east under the name of Huang-Lao, and by those in the west under that of Lord Lao Most High (*T'ai-shang Lao-chün*). As early as 165 an Inscription on Lao-tzu (*Lao-tzu ming*) had been engraved on a stele erected at the command of Huan-ti (r. 146–168), who in the very next year made a solemn sacrifice to Lao-tzu—and to the Buddha.[33] In the inscription Lao-tzu is represented as an eternal god who lives in the heavens and presides over the universe; he appears here below in order to advise the emperors on earth. The transformations of Lao-tzu are treated in a book, *Lao-tzu pien-hua ching*, that was found at Tun-huang and that must have originated with the rebels in the west.[34] The last of these transformations (or avatars) is dated to the year 155 under the reign of Huan-ti, and the last date mentioned in the book is 184, the very year in which the rebellions broke out.

30 Stein, "Remarques," pp. 56–58; Ōfuchi Ninji, *Dōkyō shi no kenkyū* (Okayama, 1964), pp. 9–21; Seidel, *Divinisation*, pp. 105–10.
31 See p. 821 below; and E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist conquest of China* (Leiden, 1959), pp. 27f.
32 See Henri Maspero, *Mélanges posthumes sur les religions et l'histoire de la Chine* (Paris, 1950), Vol. III, pp. 93f.; Stein, "Remarques," pp. 8–21.
33 Seidel, *Divinisation*, pp. 43–50, 121–57.
34 Seidel, *Divinisation*, pp. 59–75.

Later the number of Lao-tzu's transformations reached eighty-one; one of these was to be none other than Mani the Persian, Manicheism having reached China in the T'ang period. Lao-tzu was also alleged to have as a rival a religious and political messiah, a mythical character bearing his own surname, Li Hung.[35] The work that bears the unfortunate philosopher's name finally became the object of bewildering commentaries such as that which is attributed to Chang Ling by a Buddhist pamphleteer of the Sui period (Fa-lin, 572–640): "*The Way that can be wayed* means to eat good things in the morning; *is not the unchanging Way* means that in the evening they become excrement. . . ."[36]

THE INTRODUCTION OF BUDDHISM

In the midst of this Taoist explosion Buddhism was introduced to China. For the first time the Chinese were to meet with a way of thought completely independent of their own tradition, yet not inferior to it. This was a shock to which they reacted instinctively, by assimilating Buddhism to Taoism. A long period of incubation was necessary before they were to face the Indian doctrine for what it really was. But Buddhism in China always retained the scars of this initial graft, and it has been said that Chinese Buddhism was not so much Indian Buddhism in China as a new Buddhism peculiar to China.[37]

The first infiltration

Han officials advanced into Central Asia for the first time in the first century B.C. and then once again in the next century. Henceforward they were present in that zone of international communications where Indo-European speaking kingdoms were to flourish under the influence of both China and India; from this there has arisen the modern name of Serindia, given to this region until its conversion to Islam. Commerce sprang up under the aegis of the Chinese, and the Silk Road was also the road along which Buddhism traveled. The first people to spread Buddhism were probably Chinese who visited Serindia, and also foreign settlers who came

35 See Anna Seidel, "The image of the perfect ruler in early Taoist messianism: Lao-tzu and Li Hung," *History of religions*, 9:2–3 (1969–1970), 216–47.

36 Takakusu Junjirō and Watanabe Kaigyoku, ed. *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō* (Tokyo, 1924–28), Vol. LII, no. 2110 (6), p. 532a; Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese religion*, p. 376.

37 Richard H. Robinson, *Early Mādhyamika in India and China* (Madison [Milwaukee] and London, 1967), p. 7. For the introduction of Buddhism, see Henri Maspero, "Communautés et moines bouddhistes chinois aux IIe et IIIe siècles," *BEFEO*, 10 (1910), 222–32; *Taoism and Chinese religion*, pp. 249f.; and Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, pp. 18–43.

to live on Chinese soil as merchants, political refugees, and official envoys.

Yet even before the Chinese entered Serindia there must have been some infiltration of Buddhism, though it is difficult to put a precise date to its formal introduction. Buddhist sources are burdened with legendary traditions[38] and can be relied upon only when dealing with the chronology of the translation of texts; whereas lay historiography, coming from the Confucian men of letters, is interested only in the imperial court and its ritual, and in political, administrative, and military events; if it ever mentions Buddhism, it is in the form of a few small facts mentioned quite casually. This implies that their truth is fairly reliable, but it also means that the amount of information is sadly limited.

Buddhism in Ch'u under the Han Dynasty

The first precise mention of the Buddha occurs by a mere fluke in an edict of A.D. 65 concerning an imperial king named Liu Ying.[39] His kingdom, Ch'u, was centered at P'eng-ch'eng (on the borders of Shantung, Honan, and Anhui), just in the region where the rebellion of the Yellow Turbans was to break out a century later. Ying, a younger brother of Ming-ti (r. A.D. 57–75), was suspected of subversive intrigue and had presented the emperor with lengths of silk to save himself from the death penalty with which he was threatened. Ming-ti wished him well, and it was to exculpate him that the edict of 65 was promulgated, in which the emperor asserted in his brother's favor that he[40] "recited the subtle words of Huang-Lao and held in honor the humane [*jen*, a Confucian term] cult of the Buddha"; that he had "made a pact with these gods" and for three months of the year observed a period of "purification and fasting"; and for these reasons the emperor declared him freed of all suspicion, and restored to him his silk as a contribution toward the "plentiful meals" that the king gave "to *upāsaka* and to *śramaṇa*"that he entertained at his local court.

These two Sanskrit terms, given in the Chinese text in phonetic transcription, refer to lay adepts and to Buddhist monks, respectively. So here we see the Buddha associated with Huang-Lao – that is Lao-tzu and Huang-ti – probably identified as a single deity. He was treated like a god to whom a cult was devoted ("sacrifices," *chi*); and in whose honor fasts[41] were

38 See Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, pp. 19–22, 269–80.

39 Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, pp. 26f.; Tsukamoto Zenryū, *Chūgoku bukkyō tsūshi*, Vol. I (Tokyo, 1968), pp. 65f.

40 *HHS* 42, p. 1428.

41 *Chai*; this was a Taoist term, but the period of three months must be part of the Buddhist tradition.

held. P'eng-ch'eng was an important trading center (it remains a railway junction to this day) that must have attracted many foreigners and, with them, Buddhist monks. But the indulgence of the emperor indicates that the cult of the Buddha was kindly regarded even at the capital, Lo-yang, where it was associated with that of Huang-Lao. Already, then, during the middle of the first century A.D., Buddhism had penetrated as far as east-central China via the northwestern oases, where many foreign and Chinese merchants intermingled.

Five years later, in A.D. 70, this king of Ch'u was implicated in another plot to rebel, together with some Taoist magicians (*fang-shih*) who had made predictions in his favor. He was condemned to death, but again the emperor was content merely to depose him and send him to the far south beyond the Yangtze, to Tan-yang commandery (Anhui), where he committed suicide the next year. He was probably followed there by at least a few members of his Buddhist community, which would imply a first introduction of Buddhism into southern China, the region south of the Yangtze River (*Chiang-nan*).

But his community also survived at P'eng-ch'eng; over a century later we find it flourishing under the patronage of a local official called Chai Jung (or Tse Jung), who had made himself rich through his control of grain transport, authority over which had been given him by the governor of P'eng-ch'eng. This governor, T'ao Ch'ien, had like Chai Jung come from Tan-yang. T'ao Ch'ien had distinguished himself during the repression of the Yellow Turbans after 194, and by his loyalty to the dynasty at the time of Tung Cho's coup in 190, when Lo-yang was put to fire and the sword.[42] The population of the capital had taken refuge particularly in the region of P'eng-ch'eng, which was rich in resources, and they remained sheltered there from the upheavals of the capital.

Now we are told that in about 193 Chai Jung had built near P'eng-ch'eng a vast Buddhist temple, topped by a spire with nine superimposed disks in the fashion of the Indian *stūpa* and holding a statue of the Buddha in bronze gilt, dressed in brocade. The edifice, several stories high, could hold "three thousand or more people" who spent their time there reading the Buddhist canon (*ching*). To attract the local inhabitants into his Buddhist community, Chai Jung took it upon himself to exempt them from the labor charges due to the state; to celebrate the birth of the Buddha and the ceremonial washing of his icon, he organized large collective festivities at which he provided food and alcoholic drink laid out on long

42 For the events of 190, see Chapter 5 above, pp. 346f. For Chai Jung, see *HHS* 73, pp. 2366f.; Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, pp. 27–28; Tsukamoto, *Chūgoku bukkyō tsūshi*, pp. 78–81.

stretches of matting placed along the roads. Those who took part in these festivities numbered tens of thousands of individuals, and the expenses came to millions of cash.[43]

These figures are no doubt exaggerated by the non-Buddhist historians, who disapproved of the enormous waste of money occasioned by Buddhist devotion and of the tax exemptions granted to the faithful, which in later times were granted only to regularly ordained monks; Chai Jung's Chinese neophytes were certainly not in this category. Chai Jung was himself to come to a bad end, like Liu Ying, king of Ch'u. In 193 Ts'ao Ts'ao attacked and laid waste to P'eng-ch'eng; Chai Jung escaped to the region of the Yangtze, followed, it is said, by ten thousand inhabitants of P'eng-ch'eng, male and female, and by three thousand cavalry troops who were obviously his henchmen. It is possible that his Buddhist propaganda was really aimed at recruiting followers for himself in the general melee that was raging and that many of these followers were left over from the Yellow Turbans. However, we are not told that Chai Jung's Buddhism was cross-bred with Taoism, as was so often the case in this period. In any case, the episode of Chai Jung has the merit of allowing us to catch a glimpse of the spread of Buddhism among the people during the Han period. Their religious life is practically ignored in the historical sources.

The beginnings of Buddhism at Lo-yang

All the evidence tends to show that the Buddhist community in Ch'u was really just an offshoot of the community that, although we know very little about it, must have grown up in the imperial capital. At the beginning of the third century we are told of the Hsü-ch'ang Monastery at Lo-yang. The name implies that it must have been founded as far back as the first century by a maternal uncle of Liu Ying named Hsü Ch'ang. He had probably installed monks from P'eng-ch'eng in his mansion at the capital when the kingdom of P'eng-ch'eng was abolished after the death of Liu Ying in A.D. 71.[44] We are told that about that time Ming-ti, after a premonitory dream, sent a mission to inquire about Buddhism in the west. The mission was supposed to have returned with two Indian monks, Chia-she-mo-t'eng (Kāśyapa Mātaṅga?) and Chu Fa-lan (Dharmaratna the Indian?), for whom the White Horse Monastery (Pai-ma ssu) was founded; this was so named

43 One source gives the number of adherents at five thousand families; see *TCTC* 61, p. 1974 (Rafe de Crespigny, *The last of the Han: being the chronicle of the years 181–220 A.D. as recorded in chapters 58–68 of the* Tzu-chih t'ung-chien *of Ssu-ma Kuang* [Canberra, 1969], p. 137). For later developments of these gatherings as events "from which no one is excluded," see p. 848 below.

44 See Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese religion*, pp. 358, 403; and Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, pp. 32, 328.

in memory of the auspicious animal on whose back they had brought the sacred Buddhist texts.

However, this is a legend that sprang up much later, although it is unlikely that the monks' names could have been wholly invented. These two monks are credited with the first translation of an Indian text, the *Ssu-shih-erh chang ching* (Sūtra in forty-two sections) which is traditionally dated to A.D. 67, but which in reality seems to be no earlier than about A.D. 100.[45] This text is not so much a translation as a manual of initiation into the elements of Buddhist doctrine and more especially of Buddhist morality according to the so-called Lesser Vehicle. It is not in the form of a *sūtra* preached by the Buddha, but is modeled on such Chinese classics as the *Hsiao-ching* (Book of filial piety) or even Lao-tzu's *Tao-te ching*. Today we possess only considerably revised versions of the text, in which the Taoist influence is noticeable.[46]

After that it is only in the colophons of translations or in bibliographical notices that any light is thrown on Buddhism at Lo-yang during the Han period. These translations are from originals either in Sanskrit or, more probably, in Central Asian Prākrits, for most translators were not pure Indian: among them there were two Parthians, two Sogdians, also men from Iran, three Indoscythians (Yüeh-chih), but only three Indians, and even they had come to China through Serindia.[47]

The earliest and best-known of these translators is An Shih-kao, Shih-kao the Parthian, who arrived in 148 and was assisted by his fellow-countryman An Hsüan, the Parthian of the Mysteries, a merchant who arrived in Lo-yang in 181 and who had learned Chinese.[48] It is obvious that the choice of texts translated by An Shih-kao and An Hsüan was suggested to them by Chinese Buddhists, for they deal either with numerological categories of the Lesser Vehicle such as the Chinese knew well from their own tradition, or else with mental and respiratory exercises that made Buddhist *yoga (dhyāna*, or *ch'an* as it is called in China) akin to similar techniques practiced by the Taoists. The so-called Greater Vehicle, on the other hand, predominates in translations published by a second generation of translators who worked in Lo-yang at the end of the second and beginning of the third centuries; this was a period of transition between the two vehicles in India and Serindia and a time when a revival of Taoist philosophy was beginning

45 See T'ang Yung-t'ung, "The editions of the *Ssu-shih-erh-chang-ching*," trans. J. R. Ware, *HJAS*, 1 (1936), 147–55; Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, pp. 29–30; Yoshioka Yoshitoyo, "Shijūnishōkyō to Dōkyō," *Chizan gakuhō*, 19 (1971), 257–89. 46 See p. 866 below.

47 For An-hsi (Parthia), an approximate transcription of Arsak, see A. F. P. Hulsewé, *China in Central Asia: The early stage 125 B.C.–A.D. 23, with an introduction by M. A. N. Loewe* (Leiden, 1979), pp. 115f. For the Yüeh-chih, see Hulsewé, *CICA*, pp. 119f.

48 See Robert Shih, *Biographies des moines éminents (Kao seng tchouan)* (Louvain, 1968), p. 16 note 59.

in China itself. The doctrine of voidness (*śūnyatā*), and the belief in a paradise or Pure Land (*ching-t'u*) in another world were bound to appeal to the Chinese men of letters, who were starting to turn from the this-worldly cosmopolitical Confucianism, which was in sad decay. The first version of a work on Buddhist gnōsis (*prajñā*) was made in 179 by a Yüeh-chih and an Indian assisted by Chinese Taoists, one of whom held the title of libationer (*chi-chiu*).[49]

These first translations are full of Taoist expressions to which the Chinese collaborators had recourse in order to translate technical Buddhist terms: *yoga* or *bodhi* became *tao*, (the Way); *nirvāṇa* became *wu-wei*, (quiescence, or "no-ado"); the absolute (*tathatā*, "suchness") became *pen-wu*, (nonbeing); and the Buddhist saint (*arhat*) was transformed into a Taoist immortal (*chen-jen*). In this way Buddhist gnōsis was assimilated to Taoist gnōsis, which was called the study of the mysteries (*hsüan-hsüeh*). This resulted in a clumsy and obscure jargon that could only repel the men of letters, especially since those who wrote down the Chinese versions came from a mediocre cultural background.

It appears, nevertheless, that foreign monks frequented the educated aristocracy of the imperial court. As early as about A.D. 100, Chang Heng (78–139) mentions them in his poetical description of Ch'ang-an (*Hsi-ching fu*), and in 166 the cult of the Buddha was formally introduced at the court in Lo-yang, in association with that of Lao-tzu (or of Huang-Lao, according to the sources). The year before, in 165, Huan-ti (r. 146–168), who was childless, sent a delegation to make a sacrifice to Lao-tzu at Hu, a place east of Lo-yang that was supposed to be the birthplace of Lao-tzu; in the temple there was a mural painting of Confucius, who was said to have received the teachings of Lao-tzu. The "Inscription on Lao-tzu" mentioned above was composed on this occasion.[50] Huan-ti was influenced by his consort, Empress Tou, who supported the Taoist faith like her namesake, the Empress Dowager Tou of Former Han.

In 166 the emperor himself sacrificed to Lao-tzu, in association with the Buddha, in the actual palace at Lo-yang. We are informed of this by a memorial presented at that date by Hsiang K'ai. This was an astrologer from modern Shantung, the center of Taoism, who had come from his province to warn the emperor against inauspicious omens, and to reproach him with the cruelty of his regime and the dissolute life he was leading

49 See Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, p. 35, for the *Sūtra on the perfection of the gnōsis in eight thousand (metric units of thirty-two syllables)* (*Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*). For the use of the title *chi-chiu* shortly afterwards by the Yellow Turbans, see p. 818 above.

50 Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, p. 29; and see also p. 819 above.

with the women of his harem.[51] "I have heard tell," we read in his remonstrance, "that sacrifices to Huang-Lao [Lao-tzu, according to a variant text] and the Buddha have been instituted in the palace. Now their Way is the Way of purity and the void; it extols quiescence (*wu-wei*), love of life and hatred of murder, the lessening of desires and the suppression of excess." Thereupon he quotes two passages from the *Sūtra in forty-two articles*; he also refers to Kan Chi's *Book of the Great Peace*,[52] and he asks his sovereign if he does not observe such a Way. In his memorial he mentions the belief that Buddha was in fact none other than Lao-tzu who had gone to the land of the barbarians.[53] He also makes venomous allusions to the eunuchs, who were generally taking over power.

These sacrifices took place in a special sumptuous building in the palace, inaugurated by Huan-ti "because he loved music," and where the images of the two saints were sheltered under flowered canopies that were as a rule used exclusively for emperors. The sacrifices were carried out with pomp and ostentation, on altars spread with embroidered woolen cloths, using vessels of gold and silver; consecrated beasts were sacrificed, and the ritual music of sacrifices to Heaven was played. One cannot help feeling that this joining of Buddha to the deified Lao-tzu was a mere exotic fantasy on the part of a puppet ruler at a time when the fashion at the Han court was to imitate the customs of the Western barbarians together with their clothes, chairs, musical instruments, and dances. The very same year a Westerner came to China and presented himself as an envoy of Marcus Aurelius, from the Roman Empire that the Chinese imagined, under the name of Ta-Ch'in, to be some exotic mirage.[54] The history of religion was proceeding, with the Buddha taking the part of an acolyte-de-luxe of Lao-tzu.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIVAL OF THE THIRD CENTURY

We saw earlier how the collapse of the Han political order had turned men of letters away from Confucian values and from active careers in politics and administration.[55] Their persecution by the eunuch faction, which banished them to the provinces between 166 and 184 (the *tang-ku* affair), led them to set themselves up as the representatives of a purist current (*ch'ing-i*); that is, judgments supposed to purify administrative morals.

51 For translation and commentaries to this document, see Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, pp. 36–38; T'ang Yung-t'ung, *Han Wei liang-Chin Nan-pei ch'ao fo-chiao shih* (Ch'ang-sha, 1938; rpt. Peking, 1955), pp. 56–59; and especially Tsukamoto, *Chūgoku bukkyō tsūshi*, pp. 73–78, 586. For Hsiang K'ai, see Rafe de Crespigny, *Portents of protest in the Later Han dynasty: The memorials of Hsiang K'ai to Emperor Huan* (Canberra, 1976). 52 See p. 817 above.

53 For the theory of the "conversion of the barbarians" by Lao-tzu, see pp. 863, 869 below.

54 See Chapter 6 above, pp. 460f.; and p. 819 above. 55 See pp. 812f. above.

In the Han system of government, governors or local officials were expected to choose from among the people they governed those who stood out for their learning, their intelligence, or their moral qualities, and whom they thought fit to take up official duties. Such people were called "those promoted from the districts and selected from the villages."[56] Such a choice had to take into account public opinion and the judgment of the local nobility, who took advantage of this to use their influence to their own ends. Corruption and nepotism were rife.

It was against such evil practices that the men of letters wrote their lampoons, short sharp phrases that described the butt in epigrammatic form; for example:[57] "The [real] prefect of Nan-yang is Ch'en Kung-hsiao; Mr. Ch'eng Ching of Hung-nung [the prefect in charge] just whistles and does nothing." Or again, this time about Ts'ao Ts'ao himself: "A vile bandit in times of peace; a heroic leader in times of strife." These critical judgments went hand in hand with a growing interest in the study of character that was to be systematized a little later in Liu Shao's *Jen-wu chih* (Treatise on human beings), a work showing Confucian, Taoist, and Legalist influences, but whose primary aim was to fix standards for the recruitment of officials according to the characteristics which were allotted to them by fate, by their lot (*fen*).[58]

To ward off the criticism of the purists, the government turned the tables on the men of letters. It took sole charge of the work of judging the character of candidates for office, setting up a system of inspectors responsible for discovering and selecting those individuals judged fit to be recommended to the central administration and to be named for a post. This was the system known as "the [classification of the candidates into] nine graded categories by impartial and just [judges]."[59] It was officially introduced only at the beginning of the Wei period, from A.D. 220, but its origins go back to the end of the Han period. In fact it was a system of recommendation that was wide open to arbitrary decisions and to favoritism, and that left the staff of state officials at the mercy of military dictators eager to gain control over the men of letters.

From now on these latter withdrew more and more from public life, and

56 *Hsiang-chü li-hsüan*; for the origin and growth of this concept in early literature, see Morohashi Tetsuji, *Dai Kanwa jiten* (Tokyo, 1955–60), Vol. XI, p. 11,841, entry 39571 (24). See also Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 132f.; and Chapter 8 above, pp. 515f.

57 See Balazs, "Political philosophy and social crisis," p. 230; Maspero and Balazs, *Histoire et institutions*, p. 116 note 2; and Donald Holzman, "Les débuts du système médiéval de choix et de classement des fonctionnaires: Les neuf catégories et l'Impartial et Juste," *Mélanges*, 1 (1957), 402.

58 For a translation, see John K. Shyrock, *The study of human abilities: The* Jen wu chih *of Liu Shao* (New Haven, American Oriental Society, 1937; rpt. New York, 1966).

59 *Chiu-p'in chung-cheng*; see Holzman, "Les débuts du système médiéval de choix et de classement des fonctionnaires: Les neuf catégories et l'Impartial et Juste."

the pure judgments were replaced by pure conversations (*ch'ing-t'an*) in which philosophy, literature, and art were discussed, all subjects being the style of Mallarmé's afternoon gatherings, where everyone contended in repartee, cutting retorts, and wit. Such occasions were in part the pastime of the intellectual unemployed, but they also gave scope for philosophical disputation with religious overtones, first Taoist but soon Buddhist. Such was the development, on the social and anecdotal level, that according to the opinion of most historians paved the way for the philosophical revival that was to follow the Dark Ages of Han.[60]

We now see the various philosophical schools of antiquity make a new appearance; these included not only the schools of Mo-tzu (*Mo-chia*) and the school of the Legalists (*fa-chia*), but also the so-called school of the doctrine of names (*ming-chiao*). It would be wrong to translate this as nominalism in the sense that the term is used in Western medieval philosophy. The doctrine of names claimed, in the spirit of both the Legalist and Confucian schools, to make every name (*ming: onoma*), every term, every title, whether of administrative or social status, match a corresponding reality (*shih: pragma*); in other words, it meant a readaptation to the social and political order of the category to which each man was assigned according to his capabilities.[61] Even the old quarrel of the ancient text and the modern text was brought up again.

A high-ranking Wei official, Wang Su (195–256), is supposed to have fabricated an ancient text of the *Shu-ching* (Book of documents) in order to justify his attacks on Han exegesis; he is also said to have fabricated a collection of sayings attributed to Confucius, the *K'ung-tzu chia-yü* (Home sayings of Confucius), in which the saint is depicted as purely human, thus debunking the quasi-divine figure that Han tradition had made of him.[62] But it was above all the Taoist school that was to make a brilliant comeback.

Confucianism and Taoism in the philosophy of the Cheng-shih period (240–249)

Henceforward for about a thousand years, Confucianism was to suffer from philosophical (and religious) sterility; but it had one last period of philosophical brilliance, owing to its association with Taoism, during the third

60 Some doubts have been raised concerning the filiation of *ch'ing-i* and *ch'ing-t'an*. See Okamura Shigeru, "Seidan no keifu to igi," *Nippon Chūgoku gakkai hō*, 15 (1963), 100–19; this article is summarized in *Revue bibliographique de sinologie*, 9 (1971), no. 770. In the nineteenth century the term *ch'ing-i* was applied to the "purist" supporters of traditionalism who were opposed to the importation of modern ideas from the West.

61 On *onoma* and *pragma*, see Roy A. Miller, review of N. C. Bodman, *A linguistic study on the Shih Ming: Initials and consonant clusters*, in *TP*, 44 (1956), 281.

62 See Robert P. Kramers, *K'ung Tzu Chia Yü: The school sayings of Confucius* (Leiden, 1950), pp. 54f.

century. The Cheng-shih era (240–49), in the reign of the third emperor of the Wei dynasty, remains celebrated in the annals of Chinese philosophy and literature as a period of fruitful revival. It was at that time that Ho Yen (put to death in 249) and his friend Wang Pi (226–249), who is considered to be the founder of the study of mysteries (*hsüan-hsüeh*), were at work. The term *hsüan* is taken from the first paragraph of the *Tao-te ching*, where it refers to that which exists (*yu*) and that which has no existential being (*wu*) as constituting the "mystery of mysteries." There were three mysteries (*san-hsüan*) in the study of mysteries: the mystery of Lao-tzu, the mystery of Chuang-tzu, and the mystery of the *Book of changes* and its philosophical appendices.

On the basis of these texts, Ho Yen, and above all Wang Pi, elaborated a doctrine which in many respects recalls what was being termed gnōsis at about the same time in the West. Both writers commented on the *Tao-te ching*, the *Book of changes*, and the *Analects* of Confucius, but only Ho Yen's commentary on the *Analects* and Wang Pi's commentaries on the *Book of changes* and *Tao-te ching* are still extant. Neither of them commented on the *Chuang-tzu*, but they were familiar with that text. In order fully to understand the bearing of their thought, halfway between Confucianism and Taoism, we must take into account their circumstances in life.

Ho Yen belonged to the highest nobility of an essentially aristocratic, even to some extent feudal, period.[63] His mother had been a concubine of Ts'ao Ts'ao (155–220), and Ho Yen was brought up in the palace. By marrying an imperial princess of the Ts'ao ruling house of Wei, who was one of his half-sisters (the daughter of his mother by Ts'ao Ts'ao), he created a scandal. He was reckoned a paragon of beauty, elegance, and refinement, a floating flower (*fou-hua*) as his enemies used to say, or a dandy. He "loved Lao-Huang" and shone in "pure conversation." His lack of constraint brought down on him the ill-will of the orthodox traditionalists. He is even said to have brought into fashion a drug that brought on a state of ecstasy, and many of his friends and epigones were drug addicts.[64] After the death of the childless Ming-ti (born Ts'ao Jui) in 239, the throne was occupied by an adopted son, only seven years old, who went down in history as the little emperor (*shao-ti*). Another member of the Ts'ao clan, Ts'ao Shuang, was appointed regent. He shared the unorthodox tastes of the floating flowers, but was also politically ambitious. His co-regent, however, was a member of the clan of Ssu-ma. This was Ssu-ma I (179–251), who also aimed to take

63 *San-kuo chih* 9 (Wei 9), pp. 283, 292.

64 That is, the *wu-shih san*, a powder made from five different minerals including calcium from ground stalactites; see Rudolf G. Wagner, "Lebensstil und Drogen in chinesischen Mittelalter," *TP*, 59 (1973), 79–178.

over the throne; it was his grandson, Ssu-ma Yen, who was to assassinate the last member of the Ts'ao family and put an end to the Wei dynasty, so founding that of Western Chin (265–316).

During the brief Cheng-shih period, from 240 to the beginning of 249, Ts'ao Shuang achieved a dominant position and surrounded himself with libertarian intellectuals. Ho Yen then found himself a member of the secretariat (*shang-shu*). This allowed him to give official appointments to several of his friends and in particular to Wang Pi, although he only managed to get him a subordinate post. These two philosophers were now involved in public life, an option that was open to a Confucian choice but contrary to Taoist principles. And Ho Yen did not embark upon an official career without reserve. In one of his poems he evokes the wild swans that fly off into the "great purity" to escape the hunter's net, but remain condemned to follow the flow of their destiny.

Such is the compromise that dominates the thought of both Ho Yen and Wang Pi, a compromise between Taoist libertarianism and Confucian commitment.[65] In 249 a coup d'état by Ssu-ma I put an end to Ts'ao Shuang and Ho Yen's acquiescence in political involvement; both men were executed. Their friend Hsi K'ang (223–269), another famous nonconformist, was also put to death in 262 by Ssu-ma Chao, who had succeeded his father Ssu-ma I as dictator. To defy orthodoxy at such a time was to risk one's life.

Wang Pi was also the scion of a great family of learned men that had hereditary ties with the founder of the academy of Ching-chou (Hupei). This was a locality that had remained relatively sheltered from the upheavals at the end of the Han period; it formed a refuge for a group of educated men who practiced the exegesis of the classics in the innovating spirit of the school of the ancient texts.[66] Wang Pi was a precocious genius whose ideas were similar to those of Ho Yen, though his capacity for philosophical speculation was much greater. He had learned to handle dialectic during "pure conversations," and his thought is essentially based on the notions of *yu* and *wu*. The literal meaning of *yu* is "there is" and of *wu* "there is not" or "there is nothing."[67] "What there is" makes up the phenomenal world, all that is empirical, the specific, as opposed to "what there is not," which is the undifferentiated, a sort of absolute. This has nothing to do with what we understand by being and nonbeing, ontological categories that have never

65 See Richard B. Mather, "The controversy over conformity and naturalness during the Six Dynasties," *History of Religions*, 9:2–3, (1969–1970), 160–80.

66 See T'ang Yung-t'ung, "Wang Pi's new interpretation of the *I ching* and *Lun-yü*," trans. Walter Liebenthal, *HJAS*, 10 (1947), 129.

67 The french *il y a* and *il n'y a pas* or *il n'y a rien* are more accurate, because *yu* also means "to have" and *wu* "not to have."

interested the Chinese,[68] but implies rather what we would call today the existential and that which is not existential. *Wu* is not nothingness in the nihilistic meaning that we attach to the term, except insofar as it is the negation of *yu*; *wu*, on the contrary, is at the basis of *yu*. It is at its temporal origin in Wang Pi, who seems to think of it in a cosmogonic perspective, for his thought is concerned with this world and does not envisage any metaphysical transcendence. *Wu* is the primal state of the cosmos where "there was nothing," but from which springs everything that "there is."

These two wholly Chinese ideas give rise to a dialectic that is also wholly Chinese. *Yu* is not negated. It is complementary to *wu* just as *yin* is to *yang*: "How vast is the cosmos, yet it has *wu* for its heart," writes Wang Pi.[69] *Wu* is assimilated with the overall order (*li*), the *nomos* that governs all empirical facts (*shih*); it is the one (*i*) as opposed to the many (*chung*), the root (*pen*) of those ramifications (*mo*) which constitute *yu*. *Yu* is the use or application (*yung*), the practical employment, the function of the body or substance (*t'i*) that is *wu*. *Wu* is the quiescence (*ching*) that is at the origin of movement (*tung*), the quietism that is manifested and fulfilled in activism, the noncommitment of one who commits himself while yet not committing himself: "Any ceasing of movement is quiescence, but quiescence is not the opposite of movement."[70]

To take one's inspiration from *wu* is the best way to act within *yu*; such action is "unintentional" (*wu-hsin*), disinterested, "without ado" (*wu-wei*). The saint is not *apathetic*, a question that was being discussed at length in China, as it was at about the same time in the Hellenistic world; he is not free from *pathos*, from feelings (*ch'ing*) or passions. He shares them with common mortals, but his richer spirituality (*shen-ming*) permits him to sublimate them by identifying himself with *wu* (*t'ung-wu*)—just as in the Buddhism of the Greater Vehicle, "it is through passion (*klesá*) itself that one evades passion."[71]

These are a few of the ideological archetypes that go back to Wang Pi and that thereafter became part of the paraphernalia of Chinese philosophy. Behind them lies the obvious antipathy between Confucianism and Taoism and an attempt to reconcile the differences. Translated into practical conduct, quietism and activism, quiescence and movement (*ching* and *tung*.

68 See A.C. Graham, " 'Being' in Western philosophy compared with *shih/fei* and *yu/wu* in Chinese philosophy," *AM*, 7 n.s. (1959), 79–112. The Marxist interpretation of *yu/wu* suggested by Ferenc Tőkei (in his *Genre theory in the 3rd–6th centuries: Liu Hsieh's theory on poetic genres* [Budapest, 1971], p. 70 and note 83) is untenable.

69 See Fung Yu-lan, *History of Chinese philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 181; and Feng Yu-lan, *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh shih* (Ch'ang-sha, 1934), pp. 609. 70 Feng, *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh shih*, p. 608.

71 On *apatheia*, see Jean Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique* (Paris, 1944), pp. 99–100; Sylvain Lévi, ed. *Mahāyāna-sūtralaṃkāra*, (Paris, 1907), p. 87.

terms taken from the *Chuang-tzu* and from the Great Appendix of the *Book of changes*) are commitment to public life and retirement in private life, submission to the state and individual escapism.[72] This is the dilemma that has always taxed the Chinese and that is still a burning issue in China today. The political circumstances made it a particularly dramatic one for the philosophers of the Cheng-shih period and their followers. It was a vital necessity for them to emphasize the superiority of Confucianism. If some objected that Confucius does not mention *wu*, they would reply that it is precisely because one cannot speak of it.[73] Confucius had made it so much a part of himself, incorporating it, that he was silent about it, whereas Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu spoke of it constantly because their experience of it was insufficient.[74] This was analogous to Christian attempts to find hidden meanings in the Old Testament. Glossing a passage of the *Analects* (*Lun-yü* XI, 8) in which Confucius remarks that his disciple Yen Hui, known for his mystical tendencies, had on several occasions found himself "empty," that is, poverty-stricken, Ho Yen interprets this to mean spiritual emptiness, that is, *wu* (*hsü-wu*).[75]

The face of Confucianism had to be saved. It has been said of Wang Pi that he "loved to discuss Confucianism and Taoism."[76] Confucianism won, at least superficially, for Confucius remains for Wang Pi the saint par excellence. But it was only superficially, and the Confucians were not taken in. P'ei Wei (267–300), for example, launched an attack toward the end of the century on Ho Yen and all the others who "extolled *wu*" and pilloried them in his *Justification of Yu*.[77] Later Confucians reviled Ho Yen and Wang Pi as men who caused disaster, and held them responsible for the fall of northern China to the barbarians.

The revival of Chuang-tzu's thought

As we saw earlier, neither Ho Yen nor Wang Pi wrote commentaries to the *Chuang-tzu*, although the work's influence is obvious in their writings. The

72 Compare the treatment of *kinēsis* and *stasis* by Plotinus; Émile Bréhier, *Plotin Ennéades* (Paris, 1924–38), 3 (vii) 2, pp. 128f. and 6 (iii) 27, pp. 157f. Cf. also the treatment of *motus* and *quies* and their *coincidentia* in Nicholas of Cusa; M. de Gandillac, *La philosophie de Nicolas de Cues* (Paris, 1941), pp. 8 and 101 note 7.

73 *Tao-te ching* 56: "He who knows does not speak; he who speaks does not know."

74 *Sic* Wang Pi; see Feng Yu-lan, *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh shih*, p. 603; T'ang, "Wang Pi's new interpretation of the *I ching* and *Lun-yü*," p. 152.

75 Fung, *History of Chinese philosophy*, vol. II, p. 173.

76 *SKC* 28 (Wei 28), p. 795; Fung, *History of Chinese philosophy*, pp. 179–80.

77 *Ch'ung-yu lun*; partly translated in Étienne Balazs, "Nihilistic revolt or mystical escapism: Currents of thought in China during the third century A.D.," in his *Chinese civilization and bureaucracy: Variations on a theme*, trans. H. M. Wright, ed. Arthur F. Wright (New Haven and London), pp. 251f.

search for manuscript copies of the work attributed to the great philosopher, already rare, must have begun in their time, and from the beginning of Western Chin (265–316) the first commentaries, now lost, began to appear. A score of them are mentioned. Ts'ui Chuan's commentary, as far as we can gather from surviving fragments, seems not to have been philosophical in bent; nor was that of Ssu-ma Piao, a member of the ruling house of Chin who was a philologist and historian. Real philosophical exegesis of the *Chuang-tzu* started only with Hsiang Hsiu and Kuo Hsiang, the greatest thinkers of the generation after Ho Yen and Wang Pi.

We possess their commentary to the *Chuang-tzu* under the name of Kuo Hsiang, although we do not know exactly which of the two men was responsible for which parts. According to one statement,[78] Kuo Hsiang "developed" Hsiang Hsiu's commentary. Kuo Hsiang also collected the different versions of the *Chuang-tzu* then extant and from them established the version, more or less abridged according to tradition, that we still possess. As in the case of Ho Yen and Wang Pi, it is useful to say a few words about the lives of these two men, for in China one's life and thought are always related.

Hsiang Hsiu (d. ca. 300) was a friend of Hsi K'ang (223–262), the rich Wei aristocrat married to a great-granddaughter of Ts'ao Ts'ao. At the end of the Cheng-shih period, he gathered around him a group of intellectuals later known as the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove.[79] This sort of club included practicing believers in Taoist religion, which is sometimes called neo-Taoism. Some of these men cultivated the techniques of longevity, as for example Hsi K'ang himself, while for others, Taoist libertarianism turned to libertinism and *wu* to nihilism. The latter gave themselves up to drink, drugs, and – most scandalizing of all to the Confucian puritans – nudism,[80] justifying these eccentricities by referring to Chuang-tzu's "naturism" (*tzu-jan*).

One of the Seven Sages, the poet Juan Chi (210–263), composed the dissertation *Ta Chuang lun* (Toward an understanding of the Chuang-tzu). It was among people such as these that Hsiang Hsiu conceived the idea of setting up a thorough commentary to the *Chuang-tzu*. His friends, who affected to despise books and any form of verbalism, laughed at him and

78 *Chin shu* 50, p. 1397; see also *CS* 49, p. 1374 (for Hsiang Hsiu).

79 *Chu-lin ch'i hsien*; see Donald Holzman, *La vie et la pensée de Hi K'ang* (223–262 *ap. J.C.*) (Leiden, 1957); "Les sept sages de la forêt des bambous et la société de leur temps," *TP*, 44 (1956), 317–46; and Robert G. Henricks, *Philosophy and argumentation in third century China: The essays of Hsi K'ang* (Princeton, N.J., 1983).

80 For drugs, see Wagner, "Lebensstil und Drogen in chinesischen Mittelalter." For nudism, see Fung, *History of Chinese philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 190; Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, p. 79; Étienne Balazs, "Nihilistic revolt or mystical escapism," pp. 236f.; and Paul Demiéville, "Présentation d'un poète," *TP*, 56 (1970), 241–61.

asked why he felt the need to write a commentary rather than to devote himself to his own pleasure, as their Epicurean creed demanded. We are told in this connection that, before Hsiang Hsiu, the only people to read the *Chuang-tzu* had been the Taoist magicians (*fang-shih*), but nobody had been able to explain his ideological system (*chih-t'ung*).[81] In a passage of his commentary dealing with the sophist Hui Shih, even Kuo Hsiang (if it was not Hsiang Hsiu) says that before he read the *Chuang-tzu*, he had so often heard debaters discuss paradoxes of Hui Shih that they attributed to Chuang-tzu, that in the end he really believed that Chuang-tzu belonged to the school of dialecticians.[82] When Hsiang Hsiu showed his finished work to his friends, they were so struck that one of those who had jeered at him, namely Lü An, supposedly shouted: "Chuang-tzu is no longer dead!"[83]

In 262 two of the Seven Sages, Hsi K'ang and Lü An, were condemned to death by the Ssu-ma clan, who were hostile to the libertarian Taoists. Hsiang Hsiu rushed to the capital to intervene on behalf of his friends. But he soon made his peace with the dictator Ssu-ma Chao,[84] disowned his friends, and after the Ssu-ma family took the imperial throne in 265, accepted from them an official post, a direct denial of his Taoist persuasion. It is not without grounds, therefore, that 150 years later the poet Hsieh Ling-yün was to characterize Hsiang Hsiu as a conciliator of Confucianism and Taoism. Hsiang Hsiu had, in fact, composed in his youth a *Treatise on Confucianism and Taoism* that he later disowned.[85]

The case of Kuo Hsiang (d. ca. 313) is even more significant. Even more clearly than Hsiang Hsiu, he took care not to let his philosophical opinions interfere with his worldly interests. He made a brilliant official career for himself at the beginning of the Western Chin dynasty, having gained the ear of the ruling Ssu-ma clan. It is said that they treated him with such kindness that he was able to acquire an undue influence in the administration, which made many people jealous of him; he was even accused of plagiarizing Hsiang Hsiu. Hsiang Hsiu's commentary must date back to the end of Wei, before Hsi K'ang and Lü An were executed in 262; Kuo Hsiang's revision of it, to the reign of Chin Hui-ti (r. 290–306).

Their commentary is permeated throughout with the spirit of compromise between Taoism and Confucianism, the stress being carefully placed on Confucianism. In his preface, which is a superb piece of prose, subtle and full of implications, Kuo Hsiang expresses all sorts of reserve about

81 For a biography of Kuo Hsiang, see *CS* 50, pp. 1396f.

82 *Pien-che chih liu*; see Liu Wen-tien, *Chuang-tzu pu-cheng* (Shanghai, 1947) 10B, p. 24a.

83 *CS* 49, p. 1374; *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, A (4) ("Wen hsüeh"), pp. 13b–14a notes (Richard B. Mather, trans. *Shih-shuo hsin-yü: A new account of tales of the world* [Minneapolis, 1976], p. 100).

84 See p. 830 above. 85 *Ju Tao lun*; Holzman, *La vie et la pensée de Hi K'ang*, p. 28.

Chuang-tzu. Chuang-tzu's sublime words, he says, are inapplicable in practice, and his work cannot be placed on a level with the canonized Confucian texts (*ching*); he is but the foremost of the "hundred philosophers" (*po chia*) of antiquity.[86]

How did Kuo Hsiang, or before him Hsiang Hsiu, manage the tour de force of reconciling Confucianism and Taoism in a coherent and remarkable original system?[87] He contrives to link Chuang-tzu's naturism (*tzu-jan*) with the old, half-Confucian half-Legalist notion of a lot (*fen*)[88] given to each being; this was something like the Stoics' *kathēkon* or the Indian principle of caste, or like the idea of justice in Plato's *Republic*. *Tzu-jan* means to Kuo Hsiang what is so (*jan*) by itself (*tzu*). According to him, we must let the *tzu-jan* act within us, follow our innate nature (*hsing*) just as it is (*tzu-jan*) in the universal and also in the social and political order. If everyone were to confine himself to the lot which is natural to him (*hsing-fen*), then the universal *tao* will be able to accomplish its operation, its evolution (*hua*), in accordance with the natural order of things (*wu-li*) in which each individual lot is integrated.

There is such a close participation, such total immanence, between this *universum* and these *singula* that strictly speaking the *universum* exists only within the *singula*.[89] "The universe [Heaven and earth] is only a general term for the ten thousand 'things.' "[90] The *universum*, the *tao*, is to be found only in the *singula*. These exist by themselves (*tzu-jan*), create themselves (*tzu-tsao*), and operate alone (*tu-hua*). The *tao* itself is nothing (*wu*) because it is everything; it is in nothing in particular, because it is the particular in everything.[91] *Wu* is no longer the potentiality, the productive origin of *yu*, as it was for Wang Pi.[92] It is literally nothing, an unproductive nothingness; there is no longer any cosmogonic evolution of *wu* into *yu*. Each existential being carries within itself all existence; it is a kind of monad, indispensable to all the other monads with which it is integrated into the universal order.

Hence there comes about a very personal social and political interpretation of "doing nothing" (*wu-wei*). Doing nothing is not "silently sitting in the mountains and forests" (where hermits retired). This, says Kuo Hsiang,

86 *Chuang-tzu*, Preface, p. 1b.

87 Fragments of the commentary by Kuo Hsiang are translated in Fung Yu-lan, *Chuang-tzu* (Shanghai, 1933; rpt. New York, 1954); *History of Chinese philosophy*, Vol. II, pp. 208–36; and Wing-tsit Chan, *A source book in Chinese philosophy* (Princeton and London, 1963), pp. 326–35.

88 See Paul Demiéville, "Études sur la formation du vocabulaire philosophique chinois," *Annuaire*, 47 (1947), 151–57; 48 (1948), 158–60; 49 (1949), 177–82.

89 Compare *Panta en pasin* as in Anaxagoras; *quodlibet in quolibet* as in Nicholas of Cusa.

90 See Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, p. 349 note 38.

91 See Fung, *History of Chinese philosophy*, p. 208.

92 Or for Lao-tzu; see *Tao-te ching* 40: "*Yu* is born of *wu*."

is the "doing nothing" of Chuang-tzu and Lao-tzu, whose ideas are rejected by those who hold responsible posts – the officials.[93] True nonaction is action within the limits of one's lot. Thus activity (*tung*) is justified in the very depths of inaction (*ching*); one can serve the state, or a dictator, while not serving, as long as the activity is spontaneous, "without thought" (*wu-hsin*), without self-interested intention or intervention of the self in the working of the *tao*.

Hence there arises another strange theory, this time on the identity or equality of all beings. It is in the order of things (*li*) that everything should have its own determined lot through which it contributes to the proper working of the whole; in this respect all beings are identical or equal, and there can be no envy or disdain between them. Kuo Hsiang interprets the second chapter of the *Chuang-tzu*, which deals with the "leveling of things" (*ch'i-wu*) in this fashion, and claims to find in the first chapter, on liberty (*hsiao-yao*), a doctrine of voluntary servitude. If the giant phoenix (*p'eng*), the Leviathan cosmonaut that flies infinitely high, is the opposite of the tiny cicada (or turtledove, or quail, according to the variants), if the supreme saint (*chih-jen*) and the petty man are of opposite stature, it is none of their own doing; they are naturally so, by their lot, and for each of them liberty consists in feeling at ease (*hsiao-yao*), each in his accepted lot. Transpose this into the political field (and the less Kuo Hsiang mentions politics, the more he is thinking of them), and you have a justification for inequality that borders on the cynical.

Elsewhere it borders on the ridiculous. In one part of the *Chuang-tzu*, the "heavenly" and the "human" are in question.[94] The heavenly is what man has received from Heaven (nature) and which lies within himself (*nei*, inside), whereas the human is everything he has added, everything exterior (*wai*) to his natural fund. In this context the *Chuang-tzu* uses the well-known comparison of the horse and the ox. For the horse or the ox, the heavenly part is the possession of four hoofs, and the human element is the bridle on the horse or the ring through the nose of the ox, the instruments of domestication that man has applied from outside. In direct contradiction to Chuang-tzu's thought, Kuo Hsiang defends domestication, civilization, regimentation. How, he asks, can man do otherwise than tame the ox and break in the horse if he is to live? And do the horse and the ox refuse the bridle and the ring? Not at all, for their lot, the decree of Heaven (*t'ien-ming*) that governs their fate, decides that it shall be so.

Domestication, then, though put into action by man, has its principle in Heaven. The only way to infringe upon the heavenly order (*t'ien-li*) would

93 Liu Wen-tien, *Chuang-tzu pu-cheng* 1A, p. 12a. 94 *Chuang-tzu* 17 ("Ch'iu shui").

be to make the horse run and the ox labor beyond the limits of their lot, without measure. The image of the horse is used again by Chuang-tzu in a message where he pictures the free life of wild horses that have no use for luxurious stables. Here is Kuo Hsiang's gloss: "The true nature of the horse is in no way to refuse the bit and detest the harness; he merely does not aspire to luxury."[95] So much for the Chinese peasant. . . . It is quite clear that Kuo Hsiang has completely falsified the ideas of Chuang-tzu, who constantly rejected any hierarchical organization of society or division of labor, and who projects into the past (as Marxism does into the future) a society that is "one and without class."[96]

Kuo Hsiang is a remarkable philosopher, or a brilliant Sophist at least. He can conduct an argument better, perhaps, than anyone since antiquity (even Wang Pi); in addition, he is helped by a first-rate literary style. But as an interpreter of Chuang-tzu he is worthless. It has been said that it is not Kuo Hsiang who comments on Chuang-tzu, but Chuang-tzu who comments on Kuo Hsiang.

Not long afterward, the Taoist Ko Hung (ca. 282–343) mentions an anarchist libertarian called Pao Ching-yen who wrote a short treatise in which Chuang-tzu's thought was correctly understood.[97] But little is known of this author, and it was not until the intervention of Buddhism that medieval China finally rediscovered the real thought of the greatest pre-Han philosopher. Hui-yüan, a Buddhist master of Eastern Chin, acknowledges this expressly in a text written in 406.[98] No traces of Buddhism are to be found in Hsiang Hsiu or Kuo Hsiang, but maybe Buddhism was not entirely alien to the philosophical revival that they represented, although it remained unexpressed within these systems.

A similar phenomenon was to occur much later at the advent of Western culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such ignorance of Buddhism is even more surprising in that, at the very time and in the very region where the two interpreters of Chuang-tzu lived, in Lo-yang and Ch'ang-an from about 266, the first great translator of the texts of the Mahāyāna lived and worked. This was Dharmarakṣa (Chu Fa-hu) of Tun-huang, a polyglot monk of Indoscythian (Yüeh-chih) origin who died near Lo-yang in about the year 310. It was also at about this time that the first regularly ordained Chinese monk, Chu Shih-hsing, left Lo-yang for Serindia in search of Sanskrit manuscripts of *Prajñāpāramitā* (The perfection of the gnōsis). The complete ignorance of men such as Hsiang Hsiu and Kuo Hsiang on such matters is characteristic of Buddhism.

95 Liu Wen-tien, *Chuang-tzu pu-cheng* 4B, p. 1a. 96 Liu Wen-tien, *Chuang-tzu pu-cheng* 4B, p. 3b.
97 See Balazs, "Nihilistic revolt or mystical escapism," pp. 242f.
98 See pp. 842f. below; and Robinson, *Early Mādhyamika in India and China*, pp. 103, 198.

BUDDHIST AND TAOIST GNŌSIS

Ho Yen and Wang Pi had interpreted the Confucian classics in Taoist terms; Hsiang Hsiu and Kuo Hsiang explained the *Chuang-tzu* in the spirit of Confucianism. In the midst of this conflict of traditions and ideas, Buddhism entered on the Chinese philosophical scene. The infiltration of Buddhism into the educated elite was the work of intellectuals immersed in the Taoist revival who thought they found a reflection of their problems in the doctrines of the Mahāyāna. These doctrines really began to affect the intelligentsia only during the fourth century, although some first contacts between monks and men of letters had been established as early as the end of the third century, at the beginning of the Western Chin dynasty (265–316). Chinese monks, for example Po Yüan (ca. 300), had been recruited from among such cultivated families as indulged in "pure conversations" and the "study of the mysteries," the Taoist gnōsis.[99] The analogy between this and the Buddhist gnōsis could not but strike them.

We saw earlier[100] that a first, rather shortened, translation of the *Sūtra on the perfection of the gnōsis* had been made as early as the end of Han, in A.D. 179. On two occasions at the end of the third century (286 and 291), a more extensive version (in twenty-five thousand metric units of thirty-two syllables)[101] of the Sanskrit text was translated into a much more readable Chinese style. The problem of *wu* and *yu* was concerned here. The empty *wu* (*hsü-wu*) of the Taoist texts was assimilated to the Buddhist emptiness (*śūnyata*), and quiescence (*wu-wei*) to *nirvāṇa*. The dialectic relation between activism and quietism (*tung* and *ching*) was identified with the relation that Buddhism established on the epistemological level between vulgar truth (*su-ti*; in Sanskrit *saṃvṛti-satya*, "conventional truth") and true truth (*chen-ti*; *paramārtha-satya*, "ultimate truth").

Such contacts between Taoist and Buddhist intellectuals grew in number, especially in the south, after the sack of Lo-yang in 311, the barbarian invasions, and the exodus of the Chin court and aristocracy to the region of the lower Yangtze (Eastern Chin, 317–420). Such conflicts increased both in the capital city, the later Nanking, and in the modern province of Chekiang, where the émigré nobility had carved out for itself rich lands that were now being cleared. Reduced to idleness by the crumbling of the administrarion, perpetually nursing hopeless visions of a reconquest of the north, the émigré men of letrers gave themselves up to "tertulias on the mysteries" (*hsüan-t'an*) in which Buddhist monks versed in Chinese culture, themselves émigrés, would take part.

99 Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, pp. 8, 76–77. 100 See p. 825 above.
101 *Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrika-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*.

A few great names stand out during this period. Chih Min-tu,[102] who emigrated to the south during the first half of the fourth century, made himself famous by his philological work, but more especially by his theory of the *wu* of the spirit (*hsin-wu*). He took this term, perhaps with a deliberate misinterpretation, from one of the translations of the *Perfection of the gnōsis*, and explained it as a "nothing" that was not exterior, but internalized and spiritualized. "That the spirit is nothing with regard to things," he maintained, "does not in any way imply that things are nothing."[103] He does not negate the existence of the objective world, which is perfectly in accordance with the Indian doctrine of emptiness; but it is important to keep an open mind and to take account of objective things only in a disinterested way that is without intentionality (*wu-hsin*) toward them. There is no opposition between the relative and the absolute, only a mediation such as was taught by the Indian school of the Mean (*Mādhyamika*); on this point philosophical Taoism and Indian Mahāyāna were in agreement, and the Chinese were quick to notice this and to profit by it.

The theory of the "spiritual nothing" is only one of the theories mentioned at this period. There were "six schools" and "seven theses" of which little is known;[104] they revolved around the old problem of *wu* and *yu*, reconsidered in the light of Buddhist ideas that were only partially understood. One of these theories was put forward by Chih Tun[105] in Buddhist terms; it tended toward the identification of tangible matter (*se: rūpa*) with the void (*k'ung: śūnya*). If matter (the relative world) were negated, he maintained, then the void would become an abstract absolute opposed to relativity; an absolute which does not include its opposite is no real absolute. Any duality is to be avoided. Matter has no existence in itself, and in this sense it is identical with the void.

Chih Tun too was a northerner, born in modern Honan of a literary family converted to Buddhism; but he pursued his career in the south, where he maintained close contact with the "pure conversation" coteries. His special study was the *Perfection of the gnōsis*, wherein he claimed to find a supreme nothing (*chih-wu*) in which the opposition between *yu* and *wu* was resolved. He assimilated this "supreme nothing" to the Buddhist gnōsis, *prajñā*, raised to a metaphysical entity, but he also assimilated it to

102 See Ch'en Yin-k'o, "Chih Min-tu hsüeh-shuo k'ao," in his *Ch'en Yin-k'o hsien-sheng lun-chi* (Taipei, 1971), pp. 426–43.

103 See Paul Demiéville, "La pénétration du bouddhisme dans la tradition philosophique chinoise," *Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale* (Neuchâtel, 1956), p. 25 note 1.

104 *Liu-chia ch'i-tsung*; see Fung, *History of Chinese philosophy*, Vol. II, pp. 243–57.

105 Otherwise known as Chih Tao-lin (314–66); see Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, pp. 116–30; Demiéville, "La pénétration," pp. 26–28.

the old Chinese idea of the order of things, (*li*).[106] He qualified *li* as divine (*shen-li*) – that is, supernatural and transcendent, whereas in pre-Buddhist China it had always been thought of in a natural and cosmic sense.

Here we find metaphysics in the Indian style. Chih Tun is mainly famous for his interpretations of the first chapter of the *Chuang-tzu*, the one dealing with liberty (*hsiao-yao*). He resolutely protested against the exegesis of Hsiang Hsiu and Kuo Hsiang, stained with Confucianism, which made liberty into "voluntary servitude," as we saw earlier. "How so?" he cried[107]

> would you have us believe that all will be for the best in the best of all possible worlds so long as the phoenix is a phoenix and the cicada a cicada, the saint a saint and the wicked wicked, because such is their lot? If this were so, then the tyrant Chieh and the bandit Chih would have been paragons of virtue because it was in their nature to do wrong. A fig for that social order bred by Confucianism! Let us escape into the infinite, like the phoenix in its prodigious flight, like the Buddhist who frees himself from the world!

Such an interpretation was certainly more in keeping with the ideas of Chuang-tzu than the trickeries of Hsiang Hsiu or Kuo Hsiang. And so a Buddhist monk was needed to retie the thread of the great Taoist tradition of antiquity. The osmosis between Buddhism and Taoism worked both ways: Buddhism became clear in the light of Taoism, but Taoism became explicit with the help of Buddhism. There is a striking comparison to be made with the syncretism that was being set up at the same period in the Mediterranean world, especially in Asia Minor, between a dying paganism (Gnosticism, Orpheism, Montanism, etc.) and Hellenized Christianity. Chih Tun's gloss had a resounding effect in learned circles, although it could not, of course, fail to give rise to much protest among right-thinking scholars such as Wang T'an-chih (330–375), who riposted with the treatise *Fei Chuang lun* (Against Chuang-tzu).

Several lay friends of Chih Tun distinguished themselves by writings on the relation between the three doctrines (*san-chiao*), Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. In a pamphlet, *Yü-tao lun* (On understanding the Way), Sun Ch'o (d. ca. 370) assimilated the Buddha, and also Lao-tzu, to Confucius.[108] Another author, Yin Hao (d. 356), was more interested in the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* (The teaching of Vimalakīrti); an Indian masterpiece whose central figure is a layman, a businessman turned into a saint.[109] Such

106 On *li*, or *nomos*, see Demiéville, "Études sur la formation du vocabulaire philosophique chinois"; and "La pénétration," pp. 28–34.

107 See Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, pp. 129, 363 note 248.

108 Helmut Wilhelm, "A note on Sun Ch'o and his *Yü-tao lun*," *Liebenthal Festschrift*, *Sino-Indian Studies*, 5, 3–4 (1957), pp. 261–71; and see Arthur E. Link and Tim Lee, "Sun Ch'o's *Yü-tao lun*: A clarification of the way," *MS*, 25 (1966), 169–96.

109 See Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, pp. 130–32.

a figure could well appeal to the Chinese literati of this period, ever torn between an active life and quietist retreat; they found in this work a solution to their eternal dilemma of movement (*tung*) and quiescence (*ching*). It was a passage from this *sūtra* on which Chih Tun based his identification of matter and the void.[110]

The greatest Buddhist figures of that time besides Chih Tun were, like him, members of the clergy. First of all there were Tao-an and Hui-yüan. Tao-an (314–385) came, like Chih Tun, from a literati family in the north.[111] He was very learned, a philologist, bibliographer and an excellent writer. He had been introduced to Buddhism by a monk from Central Asia, Fo-t'u-teng, who had entered the service of a barbarian dynasty set up at Yeh (within the borders of modern Hopei and Honan).[112] Political unrest drove Tao-an to the south. At first he settled at Hsiang-yang (Hupei), where he spent fourteen years, from 365 to 379, and founded a flourishing Buddhist community. In 379 Hsiang-yang was occupied by another barbarian dynasty of Tibetan affinity, the Fu, which had established the powerful Former Ch'in state (Ch'ien-Ch'in, 351–394) in the northwest of China. The Fu took Tao-an to their capital, Ch'ang-an. There he paved the way for the great Kuchean translator Kumārajīva, who from 402 onward was to provide the Chinese with the best versions of the Sanskrit texts that they had yet seen.[113]

At Ch'ang-an, Tao-an found a large community of monks who were in close touch with Serindia, India, and especially Kashmir, for the Former Ch'in empire stretched right into Central Asia. He took over the direction of their translation work, taking care that they were well provided with original texts and that their translations were accurate. As a good philologist he was opposed to the procedure known as "scrutinizing the meaning" (*ko-i*), which had been followed by the first translators and which consisted in translating technical Sanskrit terms by equivalents taken from the Chinese, mainly from the Taoist philosophical vocabulary.[114] It was then that Buddhist philosophical scholasticism, *Abhidharma*, appeared in China, and its highly systematic analysis revealed to the Chinese a completely new

110 For a translation, see Étienne Lamotte, *La traité de la Grand Vertu de sagesse de Nāgārjuna* (Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra) *ch. i-iii* (Louvain, 1944–80), Vol. II, pp. 308–09, and Appendix, p. 441.

111 For Tao-an, see Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, pp. 184–204; Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China: A historical survey* (Princeton, N.J., 1964), pp. 94–103; Arthur E. Link, "Shyh Daw-an's preface to Saṅgharakṣa's Yogācārabhūmi-sūtra and the problem of Buddho-Taoist terminology in early Chinese Buddhism," *JAOS*, 77:1 (1957), 1–14; "The Taoist antecedents of Tao-an's Prajñā ontology," *History of religions*, 9:2–3 (1969–1970), 181–215; and "Biography of Shih Tao-an," *TP*, 59 (1973), 1–48.

112 See p. 847 below. 113 See p. 851 below.

114 For example, *wu-wei* for *nirvāṇa*. Naturally this method could only lead to misunderstanding. For *ko-i*, see Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, pp. 194–97; Link, "Biography of Shih Tao-an," pp. 43–45; and Ch'en Yin-k'o, "Chih Min-tu hsüeh-shuo k'ao."

form of thought and literature. The scholasticism in question was the *Abhidharma* of the Sarvāstivādin (*i-ch'ieh-yu pu*: those who maintain that "everything exists," the past and the future as the present), a school of the Hīnayāna centered in northwest India and Kashmir.

It was also at the end of the fourth century that complete texts of the four *Āgama* (*A-han*, "the four traditions") began to be translated into Chinese. These were fundamental texts of the Sanskrit canon that corresponded to the corpus (*Nikāya*) of the Pali canon and which contained the preachings of Śākya Buddha and his conversations with his disciples, something like the Christian Gospels. It was only now that the Chinese first had access to these essential sources of Buddhist tradition, for although the authority of the *Āgama Nikāya* was recognized as essential by all the Indian schools, they had never attracted any attention from the Chinese. China had taken only to such aspects of Buddhist philosophy as were close to Taoist thought, for example, the gnōsis of the Mahāyāna, akin to Taoist gnōsis, and, on a more practical level, to the mystical methods of meditation (*dhyāna*) which were similar to Taoist techniques. Tao-an turned Chinese Buddhism toward a path of indianization that it was to follow more and more until the T'ang. We owe to him a voluminous critical bibliography of the Buddhist texts translated into Chinese or written in Chinese ever since the Han period. He undertook this work in the belief that a summary of what had already been done would help further progress. Part of this catalogue is still extant.[115]

His disciple Hui-yüan (334–416/417) also came originally from the north, but was to exercise a sort of patriarchate over southern Buddhism.[116] He had followed the usual intellectual course of those educated men who had been converted to Buddhism, and his progress reminds us of Saint Augustine. First he studied the Confucian classics, then the *Tao-te ching* and the *Chuang-tzu*, and then the *Perfection of the gnōsis*, taught to him by Tao-an. He followed Tao-an in exile to Hsiang-yang, then went further down the Yangtze. In about 380 he settled at Mount Lu (Lu-shan) on the right bank of the river (in the north of Kiangsi), where he stayed until his death, obstinately refusing to leave his mountain despite repeated invitations from the court and the grandees of the nearby capital (the later Nanking). Instead they came to visit him on his mountain, and formed around him a community worshipping Amita, the infinite Buddha,[117] in

115 *Tsung-li chung-ching mu-lu* (An ordered catalogue of canonical texts), A.D. 374.
116 For Hui-yüan, see Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, pp. 204–53; Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, pp. 103–12; Walter Liebenthal, "Shih Hui-yüan's Buddhism," *JAOS*, 70 (1950), 243–59; and Robinson, *Early Mādhyamika in India and China*, pp. 96–114.
117 That is, of "infinite longevity," Amitāyus, or "infinite light," Amitābha.

whose extracosmic paradise of the Pure Land (*ching-t'u*) they vowed to be reborn; to this end they practiced what was called the commemoration of Buddha (*nien-fo: buddhānusmṛti*), which consisted of concentrating one's thought on the Buddha by visualizing his image.

Such a devotional practice was easier for the layman than the arduous exercises of mental purging and controlled breathing that were prescribed for monks under the name of *dhyāna*. But Hui-yüan was also interested in *dhyāna*, and sent several disciples to Kashmir to find manuals on the subject. One of them returned from Kashmir with an Indian specialist named Buddhabhadra, who arrived at Mount Lu in 418 and translated a large treatise entitled *Yogācārabhūmi* (The stages in the practice of Yoga), that is, of *dhyāna*. This was a manual based on the Hīnayāna but with an additional passage at the end on the Pure Land, as conceived of in the Mahāyāna.[118]

Hui-yüan was thus the promoter of the main trends that survived all the vicissitudes of Buddhism in China, *dhyāna* and the belief in the Pure Land. His work on gnōsis (*prajñā*), the third of these trends, was less fortunate, for he was too steeped in Chinese culture—such as *ko-i*—to assimilate Indian philosophical scholasticism, as we see in his correspondence with Kumārajīva on the "bodies of the Buddha" and on the Vehicles, and in his writings on the immortality of the soul, which show him rather ill-informed about the Indian doctrines on *karman* and *ātman*.[119] In principle Buddhism denies the existence of any soul, or any personal entity (*ātman*: *wo*, the ego) that might transmigrate from one existence to another; and yet everyone takes with him through each rebirth the responsibility for his actions (*karman*: *yeh*, his karmic heritage). This is one of the most subtle contradictions of Buddhist doctrine, one that learned Indians have discussed endlessly, and so it is not surprising that the Chinese lost their bearings, especially as they were so infatuated with Taoist ideas of immortality. The matter was still being discussed in the sixth century, as is shown by the *Treatise on the extinction of the soul* by Fan Chen, a Confucian whose theories gave rise to much controversy.[120]

Despite the fact that he lived in retirement, Hui-yüan played a role in the institutional development of the Buddhist church and in its always

118 See Paul Demiéville, "La *Yogācārabhūmi* de Saṅgharakṣa," *BEFEO*, 44:2 (1954), 339–436.

119 For translation and commentaries on this essay, *Shen pu mieh*, see Walter Liebenthal, "The immortality of the soul in Chinese thought," *MN*, 8 (1952), 327–97; "Chinese Buddhism during the 4th and 5th centuries," *MN*, 11:1 (1955), 44–83; Leon Hurvitz, "Render unto Caesar in early Chinese Buddhism," *Sino-Indian studies*, 5 (1957), 80–144; and Robinson, *Early Mādhyamika in India and China*, pp. 102–04, 196–99. For correspondence with Kumārajīva, see Wagner, "Lebensstil und Drogen in chinesischen Mittelalter."

120 *Shen-mieh lun*; for a translation, see Fung, *History of Chinese philosophy*, Vol. II, pp. 289–92; and Stefan Balázs, "Der Philosoph Fan Dschen und sein Traktat gegen den Buddhismus," *Sinica*, 7 (1932), 220–34.

strained relations with the Confucian state. People wrote to consult him. After a conference of ministers held at the capital city of Chien-K'ang (Nanking), he published in 404 a pamphlet entitled *A monk does not have to pay homage to the king.*[121] The question was decided in favor of the monks, to whom the state thus granted a statute of exception; but it was often taken up again later, with varying results.

Before we leave the philosophical debate that continued between Buddhism and Taoism in southern China until the end of the fifth century, we must consider a monk who was at that period a link between north and south, namely, Chu Tao-sheng (360–434).[122] He was the disciple of both Hui-yüan in the south and Kumārajīva in the north. He had been born in Hopei and brought up in the old Buddhist center of P'eng-ch'eng, where his father was stationed as magistrate, and where he himself joined the Buddhist clergy. In 397 he was with Hui-yüan at Mount Lu, but the arrival in the north of Kumārajīva, which caused a great stir even in the south, attracted him to Ch'ang-an in 405, together with several other disciples of Hui-yüan. In Ch'ang-an he collaborated with Kumārajīva on his great translations and their exegesis. Three years later he had returned to Mount Lu, bringing news and texts from Ch'ang-an. Then he settled at Chien-k'ang (the later Nanking) and lived amid the great men of learning who had moved to the south and been won over to Buddhism. It was to Chien-k'ang that in about 413 the famous pilgrim Fa-hsien returned from his long wanderings which, for fourteen years, had taken him from Serindia to India and back to China through Ceylon and Indonesia.

Fa-hsien is the most famous of the many Chinese pilgrims who explored the Buddhist world during that period, and the only one whose record we have complete.[123] He was not a great scholar, and his knowledge of Sanskrit never seems to have been more than mediocre; but his *Record of Buddhist countries*, together with substantial fragments by other pilgrims, remains a monument of information without which we would be largely ignorant of the history of the first century of Buddhist Asia.[124] Fa-hsien

121 *Sha-men pu ching wang-che lun*; translated in Hurvitz, "Render unto Caesar"; and Kenneth Ch'en, "On some factors responsible for the anti-Buddhist persecution under the Pei-ch'ao," *HJAS*, 17 (1954), 261–73.

122 For Chu Tao-sheng, see Walter Liebenthal, "A biography of Chu Tao-sheng," *MN*, 11:3 (1955), 64–96; "The world conception of Chu Tao-sheng," *MN*, 12:1–2 (1956), 65–103, *MN*, 12:3–4 (1956), 73–100; Fung, *History of Chinese philosophy*, Vol. II, pp. 270–84; Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, pp. 112–20; and Demiéville, "La pénétration," pp. 32–35.

123 On these pilgrims, see Demiéville in Louis Renou and Jean Filliozat, *L'Inde classique: Manuel des études indiennes*, Vol. II (Paris, 1953), pp. 399–404.

124 For a translation of the *Fo-kuo chi*, see Abel Rémusat, *Foĕ Kouĕ Ki* (Paris, 1836); Samuel Beal, *Travels of Fah-hian and Sung-yun, Buddhist pilgrims, from China to India* (London, 1869); H. A. Giles, *The Travels of Fa-hsien (399–414 A.D.) or Record of the Buddhistic kingdoms* (Cambridge, 1923; rpt. London, 1956).

brought back from Pāṭaliputra (Patna) a manuscript of the Sūtra of the great Parinirvāṇa, which he translated as soon as he returned to China with the help of Buddhabhadra. This was a work based on such an extreme form of Mahāyāna that it bordered on heresy, containing doctrines like that of the "great self" (*mahātman*: *ta-wo*) that transcended not only the self of non-Buddhists, but also the "without self" (*nairātmya*) of the Hīnayāna, and the doctrine of the innateness of the Buddha nature in all beings.

Now Chu Tao-sheng claimed that Fa-hsien's text justified the possibility of becoming Buddha, "enlightened," even for those who were damned by predestination (*icchantika*). This implied, in an almost Lutheran fashion, that good deeds were vain ("one receives no reward for the good works that one does"), as was any effort made to obtain the quality of Buddha (*bodhi*), because this quality exists within us and we merely have to realize it; there is a similar doctrine in Christian Gnosticism. Once again we are confronted with the conflict between activism and quietism. In fact, however, this proposition conceiving the *icchantika* did not figure in so many words in the version of the *Sūtra of the great Parinirvāṇa* that Fa-hsien translated, and Chu Tao-sheng was accused of heresy and expelled from the community at Chien-k'ang. Meanwhile, however, an expanded version of the *sūtra* had arrived in the north in which a passage on the *icchantika* actually figured: Chu Tao-sheng carried the day.

Another doctrine associated with Chu Tao-sheng was to have far-reaching effects in China. Ever since Chih Tun's day, if not before, discussions had taken place on the nature of enlightenment (*bodhi*: *wu*). Did it come gradually (*chien*), through the progressive accumulation of good deeds, merits, exercises, and study, or could one attain it by sudden (*tun*) intuition, at once, as a whole, instantaneously, outside time and space (just as in politics revolutionary totalitarianism is the opposite of reform)?[125] Chu Tao-sheng was convinced that it came instantaneously, and the seeds of the future Ch'an school (Zen, Dhyāna), which was to grow up in the T'ang period, were present in his teaching. The contemporary poet Hsieh Ling-yün (385–433), a great nobleman who spent his whole life torn between Confucian commitment and Taoist libertarianism but whose personal religion was Buddhism, published a series of discussions that he had had with various correspondents on the subject of "instantaneousness" and "gradualness."

In the introduction to the collection, entitled "Discussion of the propositions," Hsieh Ling-yün makes some curious remarks on the respective

125 For *chien* and *tun* see Demiéville, "Études sur la formation du vocabulaire philosophique chinois"; and R. A. Stein, "Illumination subite ou saisie simultanée. Note sur la terminologie chinoise et tibétaine," *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 169 (1971), 3–30.

characteristics of the Indians and the Chinese.[126] We are told that India believes in "gradualness" and China in "instantaneousness," for Confucius, as Wang Pi had it,[127] had incorporated the nonexistential (*t'i-wu*), his vision was unified and total, whereas the Buddha preached the "accumulation of study" in order to attain the Way. This, Hsieh Ling-yün goes on to say, is a difference accountable to geographical conditions and ethnic type, an ecological explanation frequently used by Chinese scholars. The Chinese, he says, have a predisposition for "mirroring the absolute" by a direct, synthesizing vision, while the Indians find it easier to "receive instruction" (*shou-chiao*).

So Confucius himself is made a supporter of "instantaneousness"! Of course the Chinese must have been quite nonplussed by the discursiveness of Indian scholasticism, with its logical argumentation in the Indo-European manner in which not one link is spared the reader, and which went against all ways of Chinese thought and the Chinese language. This must have made them conscious of the specific peculiarities of their own culture, and this was perhaps one of the main results of these early debates between Buddhism and Taoism.

The process of deep osmosis that took place during the early Middle Ages between Taoist and Buddhist gnōsis left an ineradicable imprint on the later religious and philosophical history of China. One important consequence was the formation of the Ch'an (*dhyāna*, Zen) school, which spread with lightning speed throughout the whole of the Far East from the end of the T'ang period onward. One might say of the greatest member of this school, Lin-chi (d. 866 or 867), that his thought is Chuang-tzu's thought served up with a Buddhist sauce, although it is quite possible that Lin-chi himself was not familiar with Chuang-tzu and only came under his influence through medieval echoes of his thought.

BUDDHISM UNDER THE SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN DYNASTIES

Following the attempt of the Western Chin dynasty (265–316) to reunify China after the breakdown of the Three Kingdoms, China once again found itself divided by barbarian invaders into the so-called Southern and Northern dynasties (*Nan-Pei ch'ao*, 317–589). During this period marked differences grew up in the intellectual and religious life of both the south and the north. Chien-k'ang in the south was the capital of the Six Dynasties

126 For the *Pien-tsung lun*, see *Taishō*, Vol. LII, no. 2103 (18), pp. 224c–228a.
127 See p. 832 above.

(Liu-ch'ao, 222–589), which claimed to uphold a national legitimist tradition, whereas in the north a medley of states followed one another, some big, some small, all barbarian in origin, all more or less sinified, all claiming the title of empire, with capitals in various places, though principally still at Lo-yang and Ch'ang-an. There is no doubt that, as far as institutions are concerned, this division favored the spread of Buddhism.

The barbarians did not share the Chinese prejudice against foreign religions; on the contrary, said the bloodthirsty despot Shih Hu (Tiger Shih), who reigned from 333 to 349 over the Later Chao dynasty (Hou-Chao) of the Hsiung-nu, why should barbarians not welcome a barbarian god, even for their Chinese subjects?[128] Buddhism was first appreciated for the thaumaturgic and mantic powers on which its representatives prided themselves; the same process took place in Japan and Tibet when Buddhism was first introduced there. Buddhist monks became the counsellors of the barbarian chiefs; the first example of this being Fo-t'u-teng, the Serindian monk who came to Lo-yang in 310 just before the city was sacked and Western Chin put to flight; he entered the service of the Later Chao dynasty, which praised him wholeheartedly as a thaumaturge and divine.[129] He was also, however, Tao-an's teacher.

The Later Chao dynasty occupied northeast China. In the latter half of the fourth century the seat of power in the north moved to Ch'ang-an, where another barbarian group, the proto-Tibetan Fu, established themselves under the Chinese name of Ch'in.[130] These powerful satraps, whose territorial conquests had put them in contact with Central Asia, were converted to Buddhism, and crowds of foreign propagandists, with teams of translators, gathered around them. The translators were under the direction first of Tao-an, and then from 402 under that of the great Kumārajīva, to whom we shall return later.

In the south, the sinified Buddhism of the first centuries tended to continue. The official histories stress, not without malevolence, the devotion shown by the court and the grandees of Chien-k'ang, especially Liang Wu-ti (r. 502–549), whose unbridled extravagance in patronage of the Buddhists aroused protest among Confucian officialdom. His courtiers strove to outdo each other by their gifts to the Saṅgha, the corporate assembly of the Buddhist community and its temples – a source of ostenta-

128 For Shih Hu, see *CS* 106A, pp. 2761f.; and Ōchō Enichi, *Chūgoku bukkyō no kenkyū* (Kyoto, 1958), pp. 53f.

129 See Arthur F. Wright, "Fo-t'u-teng: A biography," *HJAS*, 11 (1948), 321–71. For possible identification with Buddhadharma, see Demiéville, "La *Yogācārabhūmi* de Saṅgharakṣa," *BEFEO*, 44 (1954), 364 note 8.

130 This is Former Ch'in (Ch'ien-Ch'in), 351–94; this polity was reconstituted by the proto-Tibetan Yao clan as Later Ch'in (Hou-Ch'in), 384–417.

tious prestige. Wu-ti was one of the first to hold those "great assemblies from which no one is excluded" that were more or less modeled on the quinquennial panegyries of the Indian Saṅgha and involved enormous expense. The assembly that took place in 529 is said to have been attended by more than fifty thousand persons, monks and laymen. The emperor took the robe to preach, and his courtiers paid a ransom of one thousand million cash to buy him back from the Saṅgha. When the panegyry of 533 was held, there are said to have been more than three hundred thousand persons taking part who received, as well as the "gift of the law," lavish material gifts and meals; there were also entertaining spectacles, a display of trained elephants, and so on. There are several references to the practice, indulged in by the nobility, of pledging their persons to a monastery for a cash ransom that was paid to the Saṅgha.[131]

Practices of physical self-dedication went to lengths unequaled in India. Some fanatics gave up one of their limbs, or even their whole body as a sacrifice, and such practices were considered sacrilege by Confucians; others would set themselves on fire,[132] a form of suicide that survived until recently in China and Vietnam, either in order to avert natural calamity or wars, or else as a form of political blackmail. In India, the redeeming self-sacrifices of the heroes of the Mahāyāna were largely mythical; but such legends were taken as truth by the Chinese, who are realists, always anxious that words should be matched by deeds. There are many more examples of this literal-mindedness that is expressed in the old Confucian virtue of sincerity, *ch'eng* (etymologically the graph of this word means "to realize the words").

As far as doctrine is concerned, a great turning point was reached in the south with the arrival of an Indian master in Canton in 546. This was Paramārtha, a highly cultivated Brahmin who had become a Buddhist monk.[133] He came through Fu-nan (Bnam, lower Cambodia), bringing with him 240 bundles of Sanskrit manuscripts on palm leaves. In the midst of the political turmoil that was disturbing south China, he spent the rest of his life translating and explaining these texts, with the help of interpreters and scholarly monks who wrote commentaries to his translations and interlarded them with glosses taken from the teachings of the master. Most of the texts were of the school of the theory of knowledge (*vijñāna-vāda*),

131 Jacques Gernet, *Les aspects économiques du bouddhisme dans la société chinoise du Ve au Xe siècle* (Saigon, 1956), pp. 235–36; Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, p. 125.

132 Gernet, *Les aspects économiques*, pp. 234–37; "Les suicides par la feu chez les bouddhistes chinois du Ve au Xe siècle," *Mélanges*, 2 (1960), 527–58; Jan Yün-hua, "Buddhist self-immolation in medieval China," *History of Religions*, 4:2 (1965), 243–68; Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, pp. 281–82. On the literalism of Chinese Buddhists, derived from their practical turn of mind, see, for example, Gernet, *Les aspects économiques*, pp. 209–18.

133 For Paramārtha (Chen-ti, 500–69), see Paul Demiéville, *Choix d'études bouddhiques* (1929–70) (Leiden, 1973), pp. 1f.

also called the school of the practice of yoga (*yogācāra*). In Chinese, this was known as the school of the specific characters of knowable things (*fa-hsiang; dharma-lakṣaṇa*), because it analyzed the knowable data rather than envisaging the synthetic aspect of an undifferentiated absolute, the nature of things (*fa-hsing* : *dharmatā*).

Such analytical epistemology was something completely new to the Chinese. It had first been introduced to them by a few translations made at the beginning of the sixth century by Indian teachers in the north, where it had provoked much lively debate. It dealt in particular with the so-called basic knowledge (*ālaya-vijñāna*), which the school pushed deeper (or higher) than the empirical knowledge that derives from sensory perception. Such a subtle psychism, a sort of subliminal unconscious that "stores up" the "seeds" of things, ensuing karmic continuity, could only disconcert the Chinese. Was it good or bad, true or false, pure or impure? This question was under discussion in the north when the new translations and the teachings of Paramārtha arrived to complicate and sharpen the debate; for Paramārtha had introduced into his system a yet more sublimated epistemological category, that of immaculate knowledge (*amala-vijñāna*). In this manner intercourse between Buddhists in north and south continued despite political partition, preparing the way, in the religious sphere, for the political reunification of Sui and T'ang.

Paramārtha is also credited with the "translation" of a remarkable philosophical treatise, *The production of faith in the Mahāyāna*. Critics soon denounced this as pure Chinese apocrypha but it shows how well, by the middle of the sixth century, the Chinese had assimilated Indian thought in its most sophisticated speculations and even in its methods of expression.[134] Apocryphal texts played an important part in the history of Chinese Buddhism.[135] They became a veritable institution (as indeed in Taoism and even in Confucianism), and they abounded during the Six Dynasties. The term *apocrypha* (false or suspect, as described by bibliographers) signified texts that pretended to be authentic preachings of the Buddha, based on originals from India or in an Indian language, when they were in fact Chinese fabrications or substitutes.

Sometimes the forgers believed that they were inspired by Heaven and poured forth floods of pseudo *sūtras* like the Taoist texts that were dictated

134 *Ta-ch'eng ch'i-hsin lun*: *Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda-śāstra*. For a translation, see Hakeda Yoshito, *The awakening of faith, attributed to Aśvaghosha* (New York and London, 1967). See also Demiéville, *Choix d'études bouddhiques*, pp. 1f.; and Walter Liebenthal, "New light on the Mahāyāna-śraddhotpādaśāstra," *TP*, 46 (1958), 155–216. The themes treated reflect the problems discussed in the Chinese schools of the time.

135 See Demiéville, "Études sur la formation du vocabulaire philosophique chinois"; and *Choix d'études sinologiques (1921–70)* (Leiden, 1973), pp. 148f., 153f.

to mediums by the gods. For example, there was a nun called Seng-fa (Law of the Saṅgha) who died at the age of sixteen after having, while in a trance, recited a series of works piously noted down by the people around her.[136] There are all sorts of things in the Buddhist apocrypha of that period, including many Taoist elements dealing in particular with the theme of long life (*ch'ang-sheng*); this partly explains the popularity among the Chinese of the belief in the paradise of Maitreya or Amitāyus, the Buddha of infinite life. But there are also Confucianist elements, as the texts extol filial piety, ancestor worship, and funerary rites that are in no way Indian. The techniques of divination, astrology, auguries, and all sorts of typically Chinese superstitions abound in such literature that, from early medieval times, presages the syncretism of the "three doctrines" that was to invade popular religion in later times.

But among the literati it was such philosophical apocrypha as *The production of faith in the Mahāyāna* that met with, and continued to meet with, exceptional success. In it they found a form of Buddhism that had been filtered for their own use. In the twelfth century even such a learned philosopher as Chu Hsi (1130–1200), when criticizing Buddhism, refers almost exclusively to apocryphal texts; the great treatises of Indian scholasticism that had been translated from the Sanskrit were practically unknown to him.[137] No wonder that Buddhist literature seemed to him nothing but a series of plagiarisms.

Fifty years before Paramārtha began work in the south, Kumārajīva had introduced another form of Indian Buddhist philosophy in the north. Kumārajīva[138] was the son of an Indian Brahmin, converted to Buddhism, who had settled in Kucha, one of the Serindian kingdoms where Sanskrit and no doubt Chinese were also used. There he married a local princess who had become a nun, just as her husband had become a monk; clerical celibacy was not strictly observed in Serindia at this time, and Kumārajīva himself had children. When quite young he had been taken by his mother to Kashmir to serve his novitiate, and there he studied the scriptures of the Hīnayāna. On his way back to Kucha he stopped at Kashgar, where he was initiated in the Mahāyāna and, more especially, in the doctrines of the school of the mean (*Mādhyamika*) that had been founded by Nāgārjuna, a patriarch as famous as he is historically vague, and his successors.

This school had evolved an extremely elaborate systematization of the doctrine contained in the *sūtras* of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (Perfection of

136 Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese religion*, pp. 49–50.
137 See G. E. Sargent, *Tchou Hi contre le bouddhisme*, (Paris, 1955).
138 Chiu-mo-lo-shih, abbreviated to Lo-shih, ca. 350–409. For bibliography, see Lamotte, *Le traité de la Grande Vertu de sagesse de Nāgārjuna*, Vol. II, p. liv note 2.

the gnōsis); it preached a middle road (*chung-tao*: *madhyamā pratipad*) between the relative and the absolute; it proceeded by means of a dialectic of *reductio ad absurdum* of the two extreme positions (*pien*: *anta*) and of any duality; and it relied on a paradoxical appeal to negate the excluded third. The opposition between absolute and relative, eternity (*śāśvata*) and annihilation (*uccheda*), extinction (*nirvāṇa*) and transmigration (*saṃsāra: sheng-ssu*, "births and death"), enlightenment (*bodhi*) and the passions (*kleśa*) are resolved into voidness (*k'ung*: *śūnyatā*).[139]

In 384 Kucha was conquered by one of the generals of the Former Ch'in dynasty, who took Kumārajīva as part of the spoils, religious masters being in great demand. On returning to China the general founded a small autonomous state called Later Liang (Hou-Liang, 386–403) at Ku-tsang, Liang-chou (now Wu-wei in Kansu). Kumārajīva was held there for about twenty years, during which time he probably perfected his knowledge of Chinese, for otherwise it would be difficult to account for the excellence of his translations. Then he was again seized by a military expedition, set up this time by Yao Hsing, emperor of Later Ch'in, who reigned from 394 to 406 under the title Kao-tsu. A fervent Buddhist, he heaped honors on Kumārajīva at his capital, Ch'ang-an, where he was brought in 402 and put in charge of a first-rate team of translators that had been trained by Tao-an. The team was remarkable not only for its size, mustering up to three thousand members, but also for the quality of the recruits, and it included not only monks who specialized in the "meaning" of texts,[140] but also the best of the laymen of learning of the region.

Kumārajīva's translations, polished and repolished by his collaborators, are in such elegant, flowing Chinese that they outshine all their predecessors (for many of Kumārajīva's texts had already been translated by others before him), just as they outshone those that followed. In the end they became part of the Chinese literary heritage–as for example, his version of the *sūtras* on The Lotus of the True Law (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*), The Teachings of Vimalakīrti (*Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*), and the Display of the Blissful Region (*Sukhāvatī-vyūha*, a description of Amita's paradise). But it was his translation of the treatises of the school of the mean that gave rise to a new movement of philosophical speculation in China. There are three main works, namely, the Three Treatises (*San-lun*).[141] To these must be added a

139 *Śūnya* means zero in mathematics.

140 *I-hsüeh seng*; i.e., those who specialized in dogma, and not in monastic discipline, meditation, or other disciplines.

141 The Three Treatises comprise: the *Treatise of the mean* (*Chung-lun*), a commentary on the *Verses on the mean* (*Mādhyamika-kārikā*), attributed to Nāgārjuna; the *Treatise in twelve parts* (*Shih-erh-pu lun*; *Dvādaśa-nikāya-śāstra*), also attributed to Nāgārjuna; and the *Treatise of the hundred verses* (*Po-lun*; *Śataka-śāstra*), attributed to Āryadeva.

monumental commentary on the Sūtra on the perfection of the gnōsis (in twenty-five thousand metrical units),[142] attributed to Nāgārjuna, but probably written in northwest India toward the beginning of the fourth century. This constitutes a veritable encyclopedia of the philosophy of the Mahāyāna, conceived as a complement to the *Abhidharma* of the Hīnayāna, as embodied in the scriptures of the Sarvāstidvādin.[143]

Kumārajīva had an equally profound knowledge of both vehicles, which were in his time beginning to compete against each other in his native Serindia. This enormous exegetical treatise, highly technical and not much less than a million Chinese characters in length, was translated in less than two years (404–406), surely a world record for translation at the time; only Hsüan-tsang was to do better, in the seventh century. Let us imagine the Kuchean master, surrounded by his hundreds of Chinese collaborators, the flower of the intelligentsia of Ch'ang-an presided over in person by their barbarian ruler, in a pavilion of an imperial park on the banks of the Wei, in the suburbs of the great metropolis; and let us judge whether the Chinese are a race of ethnocentrics who do not know how to manage when they think they have something to learn from foreigners.

Kumārajīva had among his collaborators some eminent Chinese disciples, for example Chu Tao-sheng,[144] and above all Seng-chao (374–414), whose role in the history of Chinese philosophy has been compared to that of Wang Pi ("a second Wang Pi," as he was sometimes called). Born at Ch'ang-an of a poor family, in his youth Seng-chao had been forced to earn his living as a copyist. This had given him the opportunity of reading the Chinese classics and history, then the *Tao-te ching* and the *Chuang-tzu*, before he was converted to Buddhism. This was according to the usual process, but he did not become saturated with Chinese culture as were Tao-an and Hui-yüan. In about 398 he went to Ku-tsang to join Kumārajīva's school, at that time a name that was on everyone's lips at Ch'ang-an; Kumārajīva and he returned to the school four years later.

To Seng-chao we owe a series of original essays[145] in which he treats the great themes of the school of the mean in a strongly Taoist spirit and turn of phrase, yet showing himself to be far more conversant with the Indian philosophy than any of the followers of the "study of the mysteries" in the south or the members of Hui-yüan's community on Mount Lu. Chu Tao-sheng took one of his essays to show Hui-yüan, as we saw earlier.[146] In his

142 *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-upadeśa* (*Ta-chih-tu lun*); for a translation, see Lamotte, *Le traité de la Grand Vertu*. 143 See p. 841 above. 144 See p. 844 above.

145 Translated, with commentary, by Tsukamoto Zenryū, *Jōron kenkyū* (Kyoto, 1955); and Walter Liebenthal, Chao-lun: *The treatises of Seng-chao* (Hong Kong, 1968). See also Robinson, *Early Mādhyamika*, pp. 123–55, 210–32. 146 See p. 844 above.

treatises Seng-chao takes up again all the main problems treated by Wang Pi and Kuo Hsiang, such as the difference between the "substance" and its "uses" (*t'i* and *yung*). Seng-chao relates this to the Buddhist opposition between "gnōsis" and "expedient" (*prajñā* and *upāya*: *hui* and *fang-pien*) or to that between the "two truths" (absolute truth and vulgar truth).[147] In his writings the new *li* still has overtones of cosmic order that are quite alien to India, and sometimes one wonders whether he is a Buddhist or a Taoist. He does not seem to have learned Sanskrit, but he had assimilated the corrosive logic of the school of the mean, which challenges logic and makes use of the Indian form of the syllogism, the *tetralemma*: being; nonbeing; being and nonbeing; neither being nor nonbeing. His work is a sure mark of progress in Chinese understanding of Indian thought, and has left an enduring mark on Chinese Buddhism. Even as late as T'ang times, Ch'an Buddhism (*Dhyāna*) still took its inspiration from Seng-chao.

In 417 Ch'ang-an was for a short while reconquered by a southern warlord, Liu Yü, who returned immediately to Chien-k'ang, taking advantage of his military prowess to found the Sung dynasty (420–479). The Later Ch'in dynasty fell; Ch'ang-an was recaptured by a Hsiung-nu leader, and Kumārajīva's community drifted either south or northeast to the Northern Wei area (386–534).[148] The Northern Wei dynasty founded a powerful empire that was to dominate all northern China and unify it in the middle of the fifth century. Its first capital was in Shansi (at P'ing-ch'eng, near modern Ta-t'ung), but in 495 it was moved to the old capital of Lo-yang, which now became the northern center of Buddhism. The Northern Wei dynasty was in favor of Buddhism from the start, but imposed ever stricter controls on its practice. It had adopted Chinese institutions and was now faced with the conflict between the state and the Buddhist church that was already raging in the south. We saw earlier[149] how Hui-yüan, under the Eastern Chin dynasty, had won the privilege for monks of "not paying homage to the king."

This conflict between church and state constantly sapped the strength of Buddhism in China, and would finally bring it to ruin.[150] Such a problem did not arise in India, where the state was not imperial and sacred as it was in China, and where kings found it quite natural to pay homage to religious leaders. In China the chief objection to Buddhists was that they adhered to a foreign religion, which went against obedience to the emperor

147 See p. 838 above.

148 Founded by a group that was probably Turko-Mongolian in origin, being a T'o-pa, i.e., Tabgach tribe. 149 See p. 844 above.

150 For this conflict, see Tsukamoto Zenryū, et al. *Chūgoku Bukkyō shi gaisetsu: Chūgoku hen* (Kyoto, 1960), pp. 69f.; Gernet, *Les aspects économiques*; Hurvitz, "Render unto Caesar"; Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, pp. 74f.; and Demiéville, *Choix d'études bouddhiques*, pp. 261f.

and his government; in private life, it went against the family, which was the basic unit of civil society, and against ancestor worship. What opponents resented most was the parasitic nature of the Buddhist clergy, who were exempted from taxes, or at any rate from the labor services due to the state, and in particular from the most important, military service. All this, together with the extravagant gifts of rich laymen to the church, put the national economy and defense system in danger. Most of these grievances were brought up in a short apologia, *Mou-tzu li-huo lun* (Mou-tzu, or doubts solved), which is supposed to have been written at the end of Han by a scholar from the far south who was converted to Buddhism; in its present form it is probably no earlier than the Six Dynasties.[151]

What mattered most to the Northern Wei dynasty was that the peace and order of the empire should not be troubled. In order to put an end to this struggle between church and state, the government tried to set up a kind of state church by putting the clergy under the jurisdiction of a civil office. This was under a monk who was a government official, with provincial subordinates who were in charge of local Buddhist communities. Nothing of the sort had ever been seen in India, except perhaps in the days of Aśoka, and even then the powers of the overseers of the Law (*dharma-mahāmātta*) introduced by the great Buddhist monarch of the third century B.C. seem to have possessed neither the range nor the importance of the responsibilities of the men in charge of the Saṅgha under the Wei dynasty.[152]

This subordination of the church to the state soon had troublesome consequences for the Buddhists. In the middle of the fifth century an anti-Buddhist reaction was stirred up by the two rival religions, Confucianism, which aimed at taking over the Wei administrative machine to the detriment of the barbarians; and Taoism, jealous of the popularity of its rival faith. T'ai-wu-ti (r. 424–452) was turned against Buddhism by one of his Chinese counsellors, Ts'ui Hao (381–450), who had been brought up a Taoist but who made it his aim to sinify the barbarian institutions and to set up in the Wei empire an administration directly modeled on Confucian principles. He won the Celestial Master of Taoism, K'ou Ch'ien-chih,[153] over to his cause.

151 For a translation, see Paul Pelliot, "Meou-tseu ou Les doutes levés," *TP*, 19 (1920), 255–433. For Buddhism under the Northern Wei dynasty, see Tsukamoto Zenryū, *Shina bukkyō shi kenkyū: Hoku Gi hen* (Kyoto, 1942); *Gisho Shaku-Rō-shi no kenkyū* (Kyoto, 1961); and "Wei Shou: 'Treatise on Buddhism and Taoism,' " trans. Leon Hurvitz, in *Yün-kang: The Buddhist cave temples of the fifth century A.D. in north China*, ed. Mizuno Seiichi and Nagahiro Toshio (Kyoto, 1956), Vol. XVI (supplement), pp. 23–103.

152 Jules Bloch, *Les inscriptions d'Asoka* (Paris, 1950), pp. 33f.

153 See pp. 861f. below.

In 445 the emperor, while putting down a rebellion at Ch'ang-an, discovered a cache of arms in a Buddhist monastery. At that time, many rebellions were fomented by Buddhists. The emperor decreed that all monks in Ch'ang-an should be put to death, and then that all the monks throughout the empire should be killed and all Buddhist buildings, images, and books destroyed.[154] This decree does not seem to have been carried out rigorously; however, it was the first of the "disasters of the Law" (*fa-nan*) enumerated by historians of Chinese Buddhism. After a few years the decree was repealed and Buddhism came back into favor with T'an-yao, a monk (probably Chinese) who was made general administrator of monks (*sha-men t'ung*) in 460.[155] It was he who started work on the famous sculptured caves of Yün-kang, not far from the first Northern Wei capital in Shansi. The decoration of these caves was influenced by Indian, Serindian, and even Hellenistic styles. Statues of the Buddha reproduced the features of the Wei emperors,[156] insofar as they had been deified as buddhas (a theocratic solution to the problem of whether or not monks should pay homage to the secular ruler).

Already by the end of the fourth century the first general administrator of the clergy (*tao-jen t'ung*) of Northern Wei, Fa-kuo (ca. 348–420), had identified the emperor with the Buddha:

> He loves the Way, he is the Tathāgata of our time; it is right that monks should pay him homage. He who has the power to spread the Law is the master of men: I bow down not before the Son of Heaven, but before the Buddha himself.

Half a century later, T'an-yao too was to find shrewd ways to cushion the blows between church and state. To show that Buddhists were not parasites, he proposed to set them to work. In about 469 the system of the "households of the Saṅgha"[157] was set up. These households consisted of lay Buddhists who owed the ecclesiastical authority a contribution in "Saṅgha grain" (*seng-ch'i su*). Such contributions were stored for distribution to the people and monasteries in case of famine.

T'an-yao also recruited "households of the Buddha" (*fo-t'u hu*) from among criminals and public slaves to serve in the monasteries, to cultivate the fields, to clear land, and to transport grain.[158] This meant that the church administration had to run some services in the public interest. The

154 For Ts'ui Hao, see *Wei shu* 35, pp. 807f. For the Northern Wei proscription, see Tsukamoto, *Shina bukkyō shi: Hoku Gi hen*, pp. 241f.; and Ch'en, "On some factors responsible for the anti-Buddhist persecution under the Pei-ch'ao."

155 Tsukamoto, "Wei Shou: 'Treatise on Buddhism and Taoism,' " pp. 69f.

156 Paul Demiéville, "Notes d'archéologie chinoise," *BEFEO*, 25 (1926), 452 note 6.

157 *Seng-ch'i hu*; the *hu* was the fiscal unit.

158 On Saṅgha households and Buddha households, see Gernet, *Les aspects économiques*, pp. 95–101.

lands that produced the Saṅgha grain were exempt from all other taxes, and the households of the Saṅgha were exempt from military service, which gave rise to much jealousy from local officials and a rush of evildoers and ne'er-do-wells to join the households of the Saṅgha and even the regular clergy. At the census of 477 it was estimated that in the Northern Wei empire there were 6,478 monasteries and 67,258 monks and nuns. The number of monasteries more than doubled between 512 and 515, and by the end of the dynasty there were 30,000 monastaries and a total of 2 million clergy. The statistics are much more moderate in the southern dynasties at the same period; the number of monasteries varies between 1,768 and 2,846, the number of monks and nuns was between 24,000 and 82,700.

The huge growth in the numbers of the clergy in the north resulted in increasing corruption. Mercantilism and usury grew up among the monks; pseudo-monks (*wei-lan seng*), who wanted to avoid taxation and military service, grew more and more numerous. Bands of Buddhist pseudo-monks were one of the plagues of the last years of Northern Wei. Between 402 and 517 no less than nine peasant rebellions sparked off by Buddhists are recorded.[159] Such rebellions would be fomented by some illiterate monk who set himself up as an incarnation, or forerunner, of the messiah Maitreya, or else as the founder of a new dynasty that was to establish the Great Peace (*t'ai-p'ing*), like the Taoist rebels of the end of Han. Like the Yellow Turbans, these Buddhist bands were military and religious organizations, with a hierarchy of Buddhist titles given to the warriors in proportion to the number of enemies, tools of the Devil (*Māra*), that they had killed.

The rebels were opposed not only to the government, but also to the church establishment that depended on it. Monasteries were looted and the authorities of the Saṅgha were molested. Doubtless they were infuriated by the exactions of an administration that was not even Chinese and by the sumptuous foundations that had been established by the barbarian aristocracy as a show of devotion, but that meant increased taxation and labor services for the people. The monasteries in Lo-yang were overflowing with treasures,[160] and the cave temples of Lung-men, founded near Lo-yang at the beginning of the sixth century, served the new capital as those of Yün-kang had served the old capital in Shansi; the temples form magnifi-

159 Tsukamoto, *Shina bukkyō shi kenkyū: Hoku Gi hen*, pp. 247–85; Demiéville, *Choix d'études bouddhiques*, pp. 271–73.

160 For Buddhism at Lo-yang under Northern Wei, see Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, pp. 158–65; Tsukamoto, "Wei Shou: 'Treatise on Buddhism and Taoism' "; Ōchō Enichi, *Hoku Gi bukkyō no kenkyū* (Kyoto, 1970); W. F. J. Jenner, *Memories of Loyang: Yang Hsüan-chih and the lost capital (493–53)*, (Oxford, 1981); Yang Hsüan-chih, *A record of Buddhist monasteries in Lo-yang*, trans. Yi-t'ung Wang (Princeton, N.J., 1984).

cent illustrations in sculpture of this frenzy of lavish spending. It is said that in 518 more than a third of the area of Lo-yang was occupied by Buddhist buildings. Sixteen years later, the dynasty of Northern Wei fell.

After some vicissitudes, northern China was divided up between two new barbarian dynasties, Northern Ch'i (Pei-Ch'i, 550–577) in the east, and Northern Chou (Pei-Chou dynasty, 557–580) in the west. The Chou, with its capital at Ch'ang-an, was to acquire fame through its persecution of Buddhism, which was accounted the second "disaster of the Law" (574–576). Wu-ti of Northern Chou (r. 561–578), who wished to be more Chinese than the Chinese, took it into his head to establish the order of precedence of the three doctrines, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, and organized an interreligious conference on the subject, the records of which have come down to us. The chief opponents of Buddhism were a defrocked Buddhist monk, Wei Yüan-sung, who upheld Confucianism in the hope of furthering his career, and a Taoist adept called Chang Pin. It was a situation similar to that of 446 under the Northern Wei, when Chinese adversaries of Buddhism collaborated to win the favor of a barbarian ruler, and a similar situation was to arise under Mongols in the thirteenth century.

In 573 the emperor declared in favor of Confucianism. The Buddhists, relegated to third position, protested. The next year they were laid under an interdict. Monks and nuns had to return to lay life; their buildings, sacred images, and books were destroyed; and their goods were confiscated. Even Taoism did not escape the proscription.[161] In 577 it was extended over all of north China, after the conquest of Northern Ch'i by Northern Chou. Enormous numbers of monks and nuns were laicized, amounting to 2 or 3 million. The decree was not repealed until the death of Wu-ti in 578. Three years later, in 581, his dynasty was replaced by Sui; this dynasty was founded by a high Chou official who was Chinese but married to a Buddhist of barbarian extraction. He himself had been born in a monastery and brought up by a nun, and he was quick to reestablish Buddhism, on which he relied to support his reunification of China.

In south China there was no equivalent to the great repressions of Buddhism that took place under Northern Wei and Chou. The Buddhist community was smaller and less ready to challenge the supremacy of the state by rebellions. But the rebellions in the north give us a glimpse of the forms taken by the Buddhist faith among the majority of the population, of which we have so little knowledge. Contemporary epigraphy and the

161 On the Northern Chou proscription, see Tsukamoto, *Chūgoku bukkyō shi gaisetsu*, pp. 29f.; Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, pp. 186–94; and "On some factors responsible for the anti-Buddhist persecutions under the Pei-ch'ao."

manuscripts from Tun-huang also throw some light on popular beliefs. In votive inscriptions we see that those dedicating images request rebirth in Maitreya's heaven, or later in Amita's Pure Land, not only for themselves but also, according to the principle of transference of merit,[162] for their relations, their ancestors, or for all mankind.

The stress laid on ancestors is typically Chinese. There were also local associations, with a monk to preside over their activities. The faithful would group together to make images, copy texts, and meet the costs of pilgrimages or funerals of the members of the group; or else they would hold gatherings to which they gave the Taoist name of "fast" (*chai*); although these were vegetarian, they would often turn into orgies of eating and drinking, like the Taoist fasts.[163] Such associations were called, among other things, *she*, a term applied in pre-Buddhist antiquity to the god of the soil and to his sacred mound at which the peasant community would gather to worship him; here we have another case of an ancient Chinese institution that survived in a Buddhist setting.[164] Thaumaturgy also played an important part in popular belief. Many monks had miraculous powers and became legendary figures. Pao-chih (425–514), for example, became famous around Chien-k'ang for his "saintly fool" style of eccentricities (much like the Ch'an masters of the T'ang). He came to be considered an incarnation of Kuan-yin (Avalokiteśvara), the compassionate Bodhisattva, before he became the patron saint of the cult of the dead.[165]

In the sixth century a millenarian movement sprang up in the north; this was the heterodox Sect of the Three Degrees (San-chieh chiao), which was to grow prodigiously under Sui and early T'ang.[166] An Indian tradition, recorded principally in the Lotus of the true Law, distinguished three degrees or successive periods in the temporal evolution of Buddhism: the degree of the true Law, the degree of the counterfeit Law, and the degree of the last Law.[167] It was not quite certain whether the length of each of these periods was five hundred or a thousand years (or even ten thousand for the last period), and chronological calculations varied according to the absolute date assigned to the *nirvāṇa* of the last representative of the true Law, Śākya Buddha.

162 *Hui-hsiang*: *pariṇāmana*. 163 See pp. 860f. below.

164 For the *she* associations, see Gernet, *Les aspects économiques*, pp. 251–69; and Demiéville, "Récents travaux sur Touen-houang," *TP*, 56 (1970), 17–18.

165 Makita Tairyō, *Chūgoku kinsei bukkyō shi kenkyū* (Kyoto, 1957), pp. 31–38, 55–56.

166 Yabuki Keiki, *Sankaikyō no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1927); and Ōchō, *Chūgoku bukkyō no kenkyū*, p. 283; Yabuki Keiki. "The teaching of the third stage and Japanese Buddhism." *Commemoration volume, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the professorship of Science of Religion in Tokyo Imperial University*. Edited by the Celebration Committee. (Tokyo: The Herald Press, 1934) pp. 353–61.

167 That is, *cheng-fa* (*saddharma*); *hsiang-fa* (*pratirūpaka-dharma*); and *mo-fa* (*paścima-kāla*), the "ultimate time."

It is said to have been the monk Hui-ssu (515–577), born in Honan under Northern Wei and then an emigrant to Hunan in the south, who first had the idea that the end was at hand. He put the beginning of the last Law in 434. The persecution of Northern Chou in 574–578 probably helped to swell the numbers of the sect. The real organizer was Hsin-hsing (540–594), an eccentric monk also from Honan, who was invited to Ch'ang-an by the Sui dynasty in 589. The Sui were quick, however, to condemn his sect, which was fast turning into a secret society and taking on a subversive look, especially as it held the government responsible for the fall of the Law and was, moreover, becoming inordinately rich. For, exhorted by Hsin-hsing, its members made gifts to build up "inexhaustible reserves" (*wu-chin tsang*) of inalienable capital meant to prepare for the coming of the messiah Maitreya, the next Buddha of the true Law. These reserves held the seeds of private capitalism and, with the growth of a monetary and mercantile economy at the end of the Six Dynasties, such a development could not be tolerated by the state. The T'ang dynasty would also deal severely with the sect, and would confiscate its goods on several occasions.

We are better informed on the forms of popular Buddhism during the T'ang dynasty, but their origin is attested to the period of the Northern and Southern dynasties. The same is true of the schools and sects that, under T'ang, were to take on a more or less institutionalized form. They also originated in the Northern and Southern dynasties,[168] during which period many were merely communities grouped by chance around some foreign or Chinese master. Other such groups specialized in the study of one particular translation, such as the Three Treatises by Kumārajīva (*San-lun tsung*), the commentary on the Sūtra of the ten stages by Bodhiruci and Ratnamati (*Ti-lun tsung*), or the commentary on the Sum of the Mahāyāna by Paramārtha (*She-lun tsung*); and still others were more particularly concerned with the study of monastic discipline (*vinaya*: *lü-tsung*), or the practice of meditation (*dhyāna: ch'an-tsung*).

Buddhist historiographers, set on fabricating genealogies for their patriarchs, whom they considered as ancestors (*tsu*), had no difficulty in taking the origins of the great T'ang sects back as far as the fifth or sixth century. The Ch'an (Dhyāna) sect, for example, which developed in the eighth century, claimed that its first patriarch in China was a master from southern India called Bodhidharma, who was supposed to have lived first in southern and then in northern China in the sixth century, but whose historicity is lost in a mist of mythical archetypes.

168 On the Buddhist schools of the fifth and sixth centuries, see Liebenthal, "New light"; and Demiéville, *Choix d'études bouddhiques*, pp. 1f.

TAOISM UNDER THE SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN DYNASTIES

The sources that we possess for Taoism after the great rebellions at the end of the Han period are frustrating. They are either badly dated or not dated at all or else they are obviously biased, like the Buddhist pamphlets written when Buddhists and Taoists were exchanging polemics. Moreover, since such sources as there are have not been sufficiently explored, it is not possible to draw an accurate picture of Taoism during this period.[169]

One fact stands out. The institutions created by the Yellow Turbans and the Five Pecks of Grain were perpetuated in what one might call the Taoist church, an organization that grew up gradually and was not a little influenced by the example of the Buddhist Saṅgha. At the time of the Sui dynasty, the Taoist community seems to have been divided into parishes of a sort, in the nomenclature of which we find the titles of the Celestial Masters (*t'ien-shih*), libationers (*chi-chiu*), and houses of quiet (*ching-she*). These parishes met their needs thanks to contributions made in grain or in kind by the religious people (*chiao-min*, or people of the *tao*, *tao-min*) to the head of the parish, to whom thay also gave ritual meals called kitchens (*ch'u*).[170] Periodically fasts (*chai*) were held, or religious feasts that, despite their name, often ended in mass hysteria, at least if the anti-Taoist pamphlets of the Six Dynasties are to be believed. These provide information about such ceremonies, but their Buddhist authors are obviously neither impartial nor tolerant toward the Taoists.

These occasions included the "fast of mud and charcoal" (*t'u-t'an chai*), in which those taking part smeared their faces with mud and charcoal like convicts, as proof of the expiation of their sins; or they rolled like donkeys in the mud. There was the "fast of the yellow talisman" (*huang-lu chai*), exhausting sessions of prayer and interminable prostrations that were supposed to save the ancestors of those taking part from their sins. There was also the "union of breath" (*ho-ch'i*, uniting the vital energy), which gave rise to scenes of promiscuity with a whole range of sexual techniques supposed to guarantee long life.[171] Such techniques were practiced not only in private but also in public during these communal ceremonies, where licentiousness was vented behind a facade of ritualism. It was these "unions of breath," where "men and women mingled together just like animals,"[172]

169 For the essential research on this subject, see Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese religion*, pp. 1–74, 263–98, 309–430, 431–41, 443–554. See also Fukui Kōjun, *Dōkyō no kisoteki kenkyū*; Yoshioka Yoshitoyo, *Dōkyō to Bukkyō* (Tokyo, 1959, 1970, 1976); *Eisei e no negai: Dōkyō*; Ōfuchi Ninji, *Dōkyō shi no kenkyū*; Seidel, *Divinisation*, and "The image of the perfect ruler."

170 See Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese religion*, pp. 378f.

171 On these techniques, see Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese religion*, pp. 517–41.

172 Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese religion*, p. 534.

in which the followers of Sun En still indulged during the fourth and fifth centuries.

Sun En was the famous rebel who at about 400 put the region of Chekiang to fire and to the sword and threatened the Eastern Chin dynasty. He came from Lang-yeh in Shantung, then a center of the Five Pecks of Grain of which, we are told, he was a member.[173] There were many great families in Chekiang that had emigrated from Lang-yeh and whose hereditary religion was that of the Celestial Masters.[174] The Lang-yeh sect also influenced the most important figure of another famous rebellion, the "rebellion of the eight imperial princes (*pa-wang*)" that put an end to the Western Chin dynasty at the beginning of the fourth century.[175] However, Taoism probably did not cause as many rebellions during the whole of the Middle Ages as Buddhism did during the Northern Wei period alone (386–354).

It was under the Northern Wei dynasty that the Celestial Master K'ou Ch'ien-chih (365–448), counsellor of T'ai-wu-ti (r. 424–452), rose up against the excesses of popular Taoism. We are well informed as to his character and activities thanks to the precious Treatise on Śākya and Lao-tzu (Buddhism and Taoism) of the *Wei shu*.[176] K'ou Ch'ien-chih was born near Lo-yang, soon to become the capital of Northern Wei, and in his youth he kept the company, first on the Sacred Peak of the West and then on the Sacred Peak of the Center,[177] of an immortal who foretold that he would become a master to a king. In 415, on the Central Peak, he saw a vision of the deified Lao-tzu (Lord Lao the All-High, T'ai-shang Lao-chün), who conferred upon him the title of Celestial Master (*t'ien-shih*) and charged him to reform the Way of the Celestial Masters by the use of a new code of Taoism. The Way, he said, had fallen into corruption; the contributions demanded from the faithful by the Three Changs and their successors, and other abuses, such as sexual promiscuity, must be stopped; and great attention must be paid to the correct use of meditation and of dietary,

173 *CS* 100, pp. 2631f., does not use the term Way of the Celestial Master. No doubt the Way of the Five Pecks of Grain had traveled east since Han times.

174 Yoshioka, *Eisei e no negai*, pp. 77–78.

175 Yoshioka *Eisei e no negai*, pp. 76–77.

176 That is, the "Shih-Lao chih," *Wei shu* 114, pp. 3025–55. This is one of the rare monographs on religious history to be found in the Standard Histories. The *Wei shu* compiled by Wei Shou was finished in 554, twenty years after the fall of the dynasty. The part of the treatise that concerns Taoism has been translated in James R. Ware, "The *Wei shu* and the *Sui shu* on Taoism," *JAOS*, 53:3 (1933), 215–50. For analysis and commentary, see Yoshioka, *Eisei e no negai*, pp. 78–89. For a critical edition and Japanese translation by Fukui Kōjun, see Ōchō Enichi, *Hoku Gi bukkyō no kenkyū*, pp. 453–91. For the part of the "Shih-Lao chih" that concerns Buddhism, see Tsukamoto, *Gisho Shaku-Rō-shi no kenkyū*, and "Wei Shou: 'Treatise on Buddhism and Taoism.' "

177 That is, the Hsi-yüeh: the Flower Mountain, Hua-shan, not far from Ch'ang-an; and Chung-yüeh: the High Mountain, Sung-shan, near Loyang.

respiratory, and gymnastic techniques that procured long life. The moralizing influence of Buddhism is obvious here.

In 423 K'ou Ch'ien-chih had another vision, again on the Central Peak, this time of a man called Li P'u-wen, who claimed to be descended from Lao-tzu (born Li Erh), and who appointed K'ou Ch'ien-chih his successor. He taught him to worship the heavenly gods, alluding to the Buddha as one of these gods, and to his disciples as belonging to the "celestial men." He also exhorted K'ou Ch'ien-chih to support the True Lord of the Great Peace (*T'ai-p'ing chen-chün*) who reigned in the north. This was the emperor of the Northern Wei dynasty, who in 440 actually took for one of his reign periods this title T'ai-p'ing, reminiscent of the utopia of the Yellow Turbans.

After these visions, K'ou Ch'ien-chih presented the emperor with the texts that had been revealed to him. In 442, at the celestial altar (*t'ien-t'an*) that had been set up officially in Lo-yang for Taoist worship, he bestowed upon the emperor the talisman that ordained him a follower of the faith. This formal ordination of the sovereign was to make Taoism a state religion. In 446, mainly for political reasons, Buddhism was proscribed in the empire of the Northern Wei. We saw above[178] that the man who did most to promote the proscription was a Chinese minister with intransigent views, which K'ou Ch'ien-chih shared only with great reservations. The Celestial Master had nothing against Buddhism, for he realized that he owed it much.

By no means all Taoists shared this attitude, for the period of the Six Dynasties rang with quarrels between Taoists and Buddhists. Misunderstandings probably began to arise between the adherents of the two religions when in the field of philosophy the men of letters were amalgamating elements of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism in the manner already seen. The breach between the two churches became complete under the T'ang dynasty, when the Buddhists had every reason to resent Taoism; for Taoism was then in favor as the religion of the imperial clan which shared, with Lao-tzu, the surname Li. Earlier, in the middle of the fourth century, a person such as Shan Tao-k'ai,[179] who traveled through China from Tun-huang to Canton as a healer and thaumaturge, stopping at Yeh on the way to stay with Fo-t'u-t'eng, figures in the Buddhist collection *Kao-seng chuan* (Biographies of eminent monks); everything we are told about him is so strongly tinged with Taoism, however, that it is hardly surprising to see him included elsewhere among the Taoist masters. But a century later, in 467, the break is so complete that we see a Taoist writer like Ku Huan

178 See p. 855 above.
179 See M. Soymié, "Biographie de Chan Tao-k'ai," *Mélanges*, 1 (1957), 415–22.

treat the Buddha as a barbarian and deliberately declare that "it is impossible for Taoists and Buddhists to live in the same world."[180]

At about the same time another Taoist, the author of a "triple confutation" of Buddhism,[181] adopts all the xenophobic prejudices of Confucianism against Buddhism, and takes them to the point of racism; if Lao-tzu went to inculcate the Indians with the Buddhist practice of celibacy, he says, it was in order to exterminate that race of savages by genocide.[182] To throw Buddhism into disrepute, the Taoists made out that it was a mere substitute for Taoism. Lao-tzu had taught the western barbarians Taoism when, tradition had it, he disappeared to the west at the end of his career in China. This is the famous theory of Lao-tzu's conversion of the barbarians that first appears at the end of the Han period in a memorial by Hsiang K'ai (A.D. 166).[183] It is likely that at first this theory was not intended to harm Buddhism, but rather to legitimize it in the eyes of the Chinese during the amalgamation of Buddhism and Taoism by actually identifying it with Taoism.

Hsiang K'ai, in his memorial, merges the two doctrines and praises them equally. Such a proceeding is almost *de rigueur* in the history of religions. When one religion wishes to justify itself against another, it appropriates it by claiming to find in it its own doctrines. In Europe at the end of antiquity, when Christianity was engaged in disputation with the pagan philosophies, the Christians claimed that Plato and the Stoics had been Moses's disciples and taken their ideas from biblical sources; such was the theory of Justin (second century A.D.), and Clement of Alexandria puts forward the notion of "larceny," whereby the Greeks plagiarized the Bible. Conversely, when in more recent times the Jesuit missionaries revealed Chinese culture to the Europeans, there were in France the so-called Figurists who, during the dispute over rites, maintained that many fundamental ideas of biblical tradition could be found in Chinese sources. In one of his letters dated 1733 the great Gaubil,[184] who himself held Figurism in aversion, quoted the Figurists as saying: "The mysteries of the Trinity and the Holy Eucharist are unmistakably present in the Chinese books. . . ." The Figurists, Gaubil added,

> transformed the ancient Chinese kings into saints of the Old Testament, or into members of the Holy Trinity. . . . They change the country of China into an earthly paradise, into Mesopotamia or India, etc.

180 See Kenneth Ch'en, "Anti-Buddhist propaganda during the Nan-ch'ao," *HJAS*, 15 (1952), 172.
181 That is, the *San-p'o lun*, attributed to Chang Jung (479–502).
182 *Taishō*, Vol. LII, no. 2102 (8), p. 50c; see also Ch'en, "Anti-Buddhist propaganda," p. 173.
183 *Lao-tzu hua-hu*; for this theory, see Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest*, pp. 288–302; Fukui, *Dōkyō no kisoteki kenkyū*, pp. 256–324. For Hsiang K'ai, see *Hou-Han shu* 30B, pp. 1075f.; de Crespigny, *Portents of protest*; and pp. 825f. above.
184 Antoine Gaubil, *Correspondance de Pékin, 1722–1759* (Geneva, 1970), p. 364.

Or again, when the Chinese had Western science revealed to them, they prided themselves that all its major discoveries had already been made in ancient China; nothing had been invented in Europe.

This is the spirit in which the theory of Lao-tzu's conversion of the barbarians was first launched. But later, around A.D. 300, when the barbarians began to infiltrate northern China prior to their overthrow of the legitimate rulers, the Chin dynasty, we see the Taoists beginning to show the same xenophobic reactions as the Confucians, and the aforementioned theory became in their hands a weapon in the fight against the Indian religion. During the reign of one of the last Western Chin emperors, Hui-ti (r. 290–306), a certain Wang Fou, a libationer in a Taoist community, held discussions on several occasions with Po Yüan, a Buddhist monk with a Confucian education who indulged in "pure conversations" with the literati.[185] In order to avenge his defeat in these discussions, Wang Fou wrote the *Lao-tzu hua-hu ching* (Book of the conversion of the barbarians by Lao-tzu), in which he severely attacked Buddhism.

This book was to be a bone of contention between the two religions for several centuries. It was many times revised, interpolated, and indefinitely supplemented. In the end it was condemned to be burned by the Mongol Grand Khan in the thirteenth century, and now only a few quotations from the original text and a few fragments of later versions remain. A Buddhist refutation of the book was published at the beginning of the fourth century under the title *Cheng-wu lun* (A refutation of calumny). In it Lao-tzu is represented not as the Buddha himself (as by Hsiang K'ai), but as a disciple of the Buddha; the Buddha is supposed to have taught Lao-tzu in India. This "disciple" was sometimes identified with Mahā-Kāśyapa. Buddhist apologists sometimes even went so far as to maintain that Buddhism had been known in China since the remotest past, even before Confucius, of whom they sometimes made a disciple or a manifestation of the Buddha.

While K'ou Ch'ien-chih was active in the north, there were three great reformers of Taoism in the south. The first was Ko Hung (ca. 283–343), better known by his pseudonym, The Master who Embraces Natural Simplicity (*Pao-p'u-tzu*, an expression taken from Lao-tzu). This was the title of his literary work, finished in 317, a sort of encyclopedia of Taoist beliefs and sciences of the period organized into a doctrinal system.[186] Ko Hung came from the region of Chien-k'ang and died near the later city of Canton

185 See p. 838 above.

186 For Ko Hung, see Needham, *SCC*, Vol. V, Part 3, pp. 75f.; and Yoshioka, *Eisei e no negai*, pp. 60–73, for an analysis of the contents of the *Pao-p'u tzu*. See also Kristofer Schipper, *Concordance du Pao-p'ou-tseu, nei-p'ien, wai-p'ien* (Paris, 1965, 1969).

after many wanderings. He specialized in the theory of alchemy, a science founded principally on the refining and transmutation of gold and cinnabar (*tan*), from which one was supposed to obtain an elixir of physical immortality. Apart from external alchemy, there was also what was later called internal alchemy (*nei-tan*), which consisted in creating an immortal body within the mortal body by physiological methods (dietary, respiratory, etc.), as well as by mental practices (meditation, internal vision, etc.). Ko Hung seems not to have known about Buddhism. He protests even against Chuang-tzu, who "considered life and death to be equal," and against the fashionable speculations of the "pure conversations."

During the following century an arrangement of the Taoist scriptures was undertaken by Lu Hsiu-ching (406–477), a native of modern Chekiang who lived in Chien-k'ang and on Mount Lu, the place made famous shortly before by the great Buddhist master Hui-yüan.[187] Lu Hsiu-ching made a compilation of Taoist rituals, strongly influenced by Buddhism, and he also undertook the classification of the mass of Taoist texts that he had acquired during his wanderings throughout southern China. In 471 he established a catalogue divided into three "caves" (*tung*: depths), just as the Buddhist writings were divided into three "baskets" (*tsang* : *piṭaka*), and Buddhist doctrine into three "vehicles" (*ch'eng* : *yāna*). This was the first draft of the Taoist canon (*Tao-tsang*: The basket of the *tao*), of which only a Ming edition now remains.

At about the same time as Lu Hsiu-ching, the Buddhist monk Seng-yu (435–518) compiled his precious *Ch'u san-tsang chi chi* (Collections of notices on the [texts of the] *Three Baskets published [in Chinese])*, which is a continuation of Tao-an's catalogue.[188] This is a masterpiece of critical bibliography, a discipline at which the Chinese with their inborn gift for philology have always excelled. Historiography, to which the Chinese were also much given, was making itself felt at this period with the compilation of such works as the *Kao-seng chuan* (Biographies of eminent monks) by Hui-chiao (497–554); this is a vast collection concerned principally with the lives of translators.[189] Buddhism and Taoism were gradually being organized into literary and methodological structures that conformed with the traditional norms familiar to the educated elite. The task was certainly much more difficult for the Taoists, whose sacred books were supposed to have been revealed by the gods at unspecified dates, whereas the chronology

187 See Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese religion*, pp. 314–15; Yoshioka, *Eisei e no negai*, pp. 93–95; and p. 842 above. 188 See p. 842 above.

189 See Arthur F. Wright, "Biography and hagiography, Hui-chiao's lives of eminent monks," in the *Silver Jubilee Volume of the Zinbun-Kagaku-Kenkyusyo, Kyoto University* (Kyoto, 1954), pp. 383–432; and Robert Shih, *Biographies des moines éminents*.

of the Buddhist translations and that of the eminent monks was accurately known, thanks to full and precise documentation.

A third great figure of southern Taoism was T'ao Hung-ching (455–536).[190] He completed the task of his two predecessors and was the true codifier of Taoist doctrines at the end of the Six Dynasties. Born near Chien-k'ang, in 492 he settled on Mount Mao (Mao-shan), not far from the capital, the seat of the Taoist Sect of the Supreme Purity (Shang-ch'ing p'ai); this sect was the pair of the Sect of the Sacred Jewel (Ling-pao p'ai), whose scriptural authority was a collection of texts entitled Books of the Sacred Jewel (*Ling-pao ching*). T'ao Hung-ching was very well educated, versed in medicine and all the contemporary sciences, and a great collector of texts who was thoroughly conversant with Buddhism. He came from a Buddhist family, and it is said that in his mountain dwelling he had built a Buddhist *stūpa* and worshipped both a Taoist image and a Buddhist image. He is even reported to have adopted the name of a Bodhisattva and to have taken a vow to observe the five prohibitions (*wu-chieh*: *pañca-śīlāni*) of the Buddhist layman. He had been in touch with Liang Wu-ti, an ardent Buddhist, before he came to the throne in 502, and he continued to be his counsellor, just as K'ou Ch'ien-chih had served T'ai-Wu-ti of Northern Wei.

The main work attributed to T'ao Hung-ching, correctly, it would seem, bears the title *Chen-kao* (Revelations of truth); it is made up of texts revealed by men of truth (*chen-jen*), Taoist immortals. This was a new encyclopedia of contemporary Taoism made accessible to non-Taoist literati. It is heavily influenced by Buddhism. In the postface T'ao Hung-ching declares that his texts were "revealed by men of truth" just as the Buddhist *sūtras* were "spoken by the Buddha" (*buddhabhāṣita*), and one whole passage of the *Revelations of truth* is an imitation pure and simple of the Sūtra in forty-two articles, put into the mouths of inspired immortals. The *sūtra* in question dates back to the period when Buddhism and Taoism were closely mingled,[191] and lent itself easily to such plagiarism. This loan seems itself to have been borrowed by T'ao Hung-ching from one of his fifth-century predecessors, Ku Huan,[192] as well as from a work of the Sect of Supreme Purity that is preserved in the Taoist canon. The Buddhists, for their part, paid the Taoist plagiarists back in kind. The beginning of the Buddhist *Pao-tsang lun* (Treatise of the precious treasure), a pamphlet attributed to Seng-chao but probably by one of his later followers, is a word-for-word imitation of Lao-tzu:[193]

190 See Yoshioka, *Eisei e no negai*, pp. 100–14.
191 See p. 824 above. 192 See p. 862 above.
193 *Taishō*, Vol. XLV, no. 1857, p. 143b.; Robinson, *Early Mādhyamika*, pp. 125, 155; and Yoshioka, "Shijūnishōkyō to Dōkyō."

Emptiness (*śūnya*) that can be "made empty" is not true emptiness. Matter (*rūpa*) that can be "materialized" is not true matter. True matter is without form; true emptiness is without name. The nameless is the father of the name, and the matter-less is the mother of matter.

The mixing of Taoism and Buddhism, which at first took place mainly on the philosophical level, continued on the religious level despite the quarrels between their respective followers. However, the exchange between the two religions gradually became one-way, for Taoism borrowed far more from Buddhism than it lent, especially with respect to institutions. The priestly staff for Taoism, the *tao-shih,* was assimilated to the monastic Saṅgha, and the Taoist phalansteries, called observatories (*kuan*),[194] became similar to the Buddhist monasteries (*ssu*). The *tao-shih* adopted a special habit, just as the Buddhist monks wore the robe (*chia-sha*), and they even began to take vows of celibacy, although this went against all the sexual theories and practices of Taoism. In the middle of the sixth century we find the Taoist master Sung Wen-ming imposing celibacy on his disciples, as well as the wearing of a specific costume. Some Taoists were still protesting against this during the Sui period, but celibacy remained the norm under T'ang.[195] From then on, the Taoist church was practically modeled on the Buddhist church.

All this does not mean, however, that the Taoists did not retain their own doctrines and practices, which included a whole range of psychophysical exercises recalling the Indian yoga. In one of his works, *Teng-chen yin-chüeh* (The secret formula for ascent to [the state of a man of] truth), T'ao Hung-ching tried to draw a hierarchical table of the Taoist pantheon with its innumerable gods (up to 36,000) who inhabited the human body as well as the outside world, in accordance with the old idea of the micro-macrocosm. The supreme deity, the Great One (*t'ai-i*), paradoxically had three essential substances, Taoism being obsessed with triads. These were the Three Ones (*san-i*), located in three superposed regions of the body known as the three cinnabar fields (*tan-t'ien*), an allusion to the immortality drug. The adept could inspect the Three Ones by the method of internal vision (*nei-shih, nei-kuan*), which also enabled him to follow and control the circulation throughout the body of the breath (*ch'i*), to which was assigned a fundamental role in the functioning of the vital energy. He was able, with the help of gymnastic, dietary, respiratory, erotic and other exercises, to nourish his vital nature (*yang-hsing*) and to guarantee long life (*ch'ang-sheng*) with an indestructible body made of "bones of gold and flesh of jade."

194 This term was probably used for the homophone *kuan*, meaning "dwelling," "hostelry," "mansion." 195 Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese religion*, pp. 390–91.

Here we have a whole religious world, of striking originality, that modern sinology is now investigating. A knowledge of this world is essential for the undersranding of popular religion in modern China; moreover, Chinese science has gained much from the alchemical, pharmacological, and medical research undertaken by the Taoists as early as the period of the Southern and Northern dynasties.

BUDDHISM AND TAOISM UNDER THE SUI DYNASTY

The founder of the Sui dynasty (581–613), born Yang Chien, who reigned until 604 wirh the ritle of Wen-ti, had been brought up as a Buddhist, and one of the first rhings that he did was to put an end to the proscription instigated by the Northern Chou dynasty and to reinstate Buddhism.[196] He relied on Buddhism to ensure the reunification of China once he had reconquered its whole territory by putting an end to the northern dynasties in 581 and the southern dynasties in 589. But he was careful not to neglect Taoism, which had also been proscribed by the Northern Chou dynasty. He even took for the title of the first of his reign periods (581–600) the term K'ai-huang, Inauguration of Sovereignty. This was the name of one of the cosmic periods (*kalpa*: *chieh*) that Taoism, after the manner of Buddhism, had established in the evolution of the world.[197] He was anxious to foster the spiritual unity of his subjects and not to favor one of their religious allegiances to the detriment of another.

In an edict issued shortly after his accession to the throne in 581,[198] he declared that he respected Lao-tzu just as much as the Buddha, stressing that both tried to reduce everything to the One; nevertheless, it was the founding of Buddhist monasteries that was proscribed in this edict. But the next year he created a Taoist establishment at Ch'ang-an called the Mysterious Capital (Hsüan-tu kuan). There he installed *tao-shih* responsible for cultivating those Taoist arts that might serve the state. This institution had at its head a superior (*kuan-chu*) through whom the state controlled the Taoist community. One of the great Taoist philosophical texts of medieval times dates back, in its original form, to the Sui dynasty. This is the *Pen-chi ching* (Book of the first origin),[199] a work deeply imbued with Buddhism, even to its title, which corresponds to the Sanskrit *pūrva-koṭi*.

196 Arthur F. Wright, "Sui Yang-ti: Personality and stereotype," in *The Confucian persuasion*, ed. Arthur F. Wright (Stanford, Calif., 1960), pp. 54, 56; Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, pp. 194–209; *Cambridge History of China*, ed. Denis Twitchett, Vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 75f.

197 For the Taoist *kalpas*, see *Sui shu* 35, p. 1091.

198 See Arthur F. Wright, "The formation of Sui ideology, 581–604," *in Chinese thought and institutions*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Chicago, 1957), p. 86.

199 See Wu Chi-yu ed., *Pen-tsi king* (*Livre du terme originel*), *ouvrage taoïste inédit du VIIe siècle, manuscrits retrouvés a Touen-houang reproduits en facsimilé* (Paris, 1960).

In 585 Wen-ti organized a debate on the controversial question of the conversion of the barbarians by Lao-tzu,[200] in which he probably took the Buddhist side, although in 586 he constructed a temple to Lao-tzu. Nor was he neglecting Confucianism, whose rites and teachings he was careful to maintain in order to win over the educated officials, especially in the south. He also reconstituted the literary heritage that had suffered so badly from military upheavals and destructions of the imperial library. The state levied a poll tax on the population in order to pay private collectors a bolt of silk for each manuscript roll that they lent to be copied. We are told that the Buddhist books collected in this way were far more numerous than the manuscripts of the Confucian canonical texts.[201]

Political motives are evident in the steps taken by the Sui dynasty to establish a rigorous state control over the Buddhist church and its activities, as they had been for the northern dynasties. In 600 the Sect of the Three Degrees[202] was laid under interdict, and in 607 monks were ordered to bow before the emperor and officials. The center for the control of Buddhism was the Monastery of the Great Restoration of Good (Ta-hsing-shan ssu), the ruins of which are still to be seen at Ch'ang-an. Ta-hsing was in fact the name given to the new walled capital city built by Wen-ti, and *shan* (good) was taken from the name of the quarter in which the monastery stood, opposite the Taoist Hsüan-tu kuan.[203] The monastery included an administrative bureau called the Illuminated Mystery (Chao-hsüan ssu), composed of a whole bureaucratic hierarchy headed by a grand general administrator of the Buddhists (*ta-t'ung*). The bureau had local branches throughout the provinces. This system of control was inherited from the northern dynasties.

As a counterpart to their recognition by the state, the Buddhists had to take part in the dynastic cult. In about 584, monasteries called the Great Restoration of the State (Ta-hsing-kuo ssu) were set up in forty-five prefectures, which were responsible for the religious services due to the dynasty. The emperor set himself up as a universal monarch modeled on the "kings who turned the wheel,"[204] of whom the legendary Aśoka was the best-known example. In an attempt to imitate him, on three occasions after the conquest of the south (601, 602 and 604), Wen-ti distributed relics over which *stūpas* were solemnly erected. But in all only 111 *stūpas* were built, whereas Aśoka was supposed in legend to have built 84,000 in one day.

Southern China was not completely conquered until 589, and there the

200 See pp. 826, 863 above. 201 "Tenfold and hundredfold more numerous;" *Sui shu* 35, p. 1099.
202 See p. 858 above.
203 See Yamazaki Hiroshi, *Zui-Tō bukkyō shi no kenkyū* (Kyoto, 1967), pp. 45–46.
204 *Cakravarti-rāja*: *Chuan-lun wang*.

Sui dynasty at first encountered vigorous opposition, for it was regarded as barbarian, just like those earlier northern dynasties that generations of émigrés had denounced. The Buddhist clergy, whose ecclesiastical leaders were replaced by Sui supporters, were implicated in the rebellions, and their goods were not spared. The great Buddhist master in the south at that time was Chih-i, the founder of the T'ien-t'ai sect,[205] to whom Wen-ti's eldest son, Yang Kuang, the future Yang-ti (r. 605–617), paid assiduous court. Yang Kuang was married to a southern princess; and in 590 he became governor-general of Yang prefecture (*Yang-chou tsung-kuan*), and was in effect viceroy of the whole of southeast China. We possess a series of letters exchanged between this redoubtable character and the reverend monk, who showed himself full of reserve but nevertheless finally journeyed to Chien-k'ang to confer on the prince ordination as a Bodhisattva. He then retired to Mount Lu in Kiangsi; after another stay in Chien-k'ang from 593 to 595, he returned to his retreat on Mount T'ien-t'ai (Chekiang), where he died at the beginning of 598.

So far as doctrine is concerned, the two great figures of Buddhism during the Sui dynasty were Chi-tsang and Chih-i, both southerners. Chi-tsang (549–623) was born in Chien-k'ang into a family of Iranian origin (from An-hsi: Arsak) that had emigrated to China via Tonkin and Canton.[206] He had started his career under the Ch'en dynasty (557–589), and when Sui forces arrived he escaped to K'uai-chi (Chekiang), where he lived in the Chia-hsiang monastery; it was there that he acquired his title of Grand Master of Chia-hsiang (*Chia-hsiang ta-shih*), and came into contact with Chih-i. When Sui Yang-ti came to the throne (605), he installed Chi-tsang in Chien-k'ang and later in Ch'ang-an, where he died at the beginning of the T'ang period.

Chi-tsang specialized in the study of the Mādhyamika school, and is reckoned to be the most important patriarch of the Sect of the Three Treatises.[207] To him we owe commentaries on these treatises as well as personal writings that show considerable progress, compared with Seng-chao, in understanding the genuine Indian dogmatics. There is, however, also an essay called *Erh-ti i* (The meaning of the two truths). Here the distinction between vulgar truth and absolute truth, which was the loophole whereby the Mādhyamika school used to resolve its contradictions, is still assimilated to the old Chinese ideas of the existential and the nonexistential (*yu, wu*). The indianization of Buddhism did not go far under Sui. The few Indian translators who worked at Ch'ang-an and Lo-yang during

205 See p. 871 below.
206 See Chan, *Source book in Chinese philosophy*, pp. 357–69; and Fung, *History of Chinese philosophy*, Vol. II, pp. 294–99. 207 *San-lun tsung*; see p. 851 above.

that period[208] added nothing essential to the thesaurus of Chinese versions of the Sanskrit scriptures.

Chih-i (otherwise known as Chih-che ta-shih) was born in 538 in modern Honan, and was totally Chinese in origin.[209] He was the son of an official of the Liang dynasty (502–556) who had been killed when Chien-k'ang was sacked by the Western Wei dynasty in 554. In his youth Chih-i traveled in the north, where he became the disciple of Hui-ssu (515–577),[210] who taught him the Lotus of the true Law, Perfection of the gnōsis, and the Mahāyāna Sūtra of the great Parinirvāna; these texts were to influence his thought for the rest of his life. In 567, under the Ch'en dynasty, Chih-i settled at Chien-k'ang, and from there he went in 575 to Mount T'ien-t'ai, the Celestial Terrace. This was an ancient seat of Taoist hermits in modern Chekiang, standing over three thousand feet high, to the north of Ning-po.[211] Perhaps Chih-i had been afraid that the proscription of Buddhism decreed by the Northern Chou dynasty that very same year (575) would finally spread to the south. But ten years later (585), he was recalled to Chien-k'ang, where he preached in the Ch'en palace and associated with the great men at court, with whom he held "pure conversations," thus taking part in the form of Buddhism current among educated men in southern China. He fled from Chien-k'ang when the Sui forces arrived in 587, but they were so insistent that he was obliged to re-establish himself in Chien-k'ang in 591, before returning to Mount T'ien-t'ai to die in 598.

Chih-i's thought is essentially Chinese, and heralds the syncretism of later centuries. His is no longer the philosophical syncretism of earlier times that amalgamated Buddhism and Taoism, although we do still find some elements of Taoism in his writings, but rather a syncretism of the Indian doctrines, which were by then much better known. He undertook a classificatory analysis of the doctrines (*chiao-p'an*) that is partly chronological (such historical concerns were dear to the Chinese heart), partly purely doctrinal. In it he attempted to bring out first the five epochs (*wu-shih*) during which the Buddha is supposed to have taught. These were, in order, the Flowery Ornamentation (*Avataṃsaka: Hua-yen*); the Lesser Vehicle (preached in the Gazelle Park in Benares, *Mṛgadava: Lu-yüan*); the "developed" *sūtras* (*vaipulya*, the Greater Vehicle); the Perfection of the gnōsis (*Prajñāpāramitā*); the Lotus of the true Law (*Saddharmapuḍḍarīka*); and last the Sūtra of the great Parinirvāṇa (*Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*). Second, he tried

208 Jñānagupta, from Gandhāra (523–600); Dharmagupta, from southern India (d. 619); Narendrayaśas and Vinītaruci, from Oḍḍiyāna (the Swāt valley in western Pakistan, north of Gandhāra).

209 See Hurvitz, "Render unto Caesar"; Chih-i died at the beginning of 598.

210 See p. 859 above.

211 On Mount T'ien-t'ai and Chih-i, see Henri Maspero, "Rapport sommaire sur une mission archéologique au Tchö-kiang," *BEFEO*, 14:8 (1914), 58f.

to bring out eight doctrines (or teachings, *pa-chiao*), divided into two subgroups:

1. Canonical doctrine (*san-tsang chiao*), common doctrine (common to the Three Vehicles: *t'ung-chiao*), particular doctrine (the doctrine of each of the Three Vehicles: *pieh-chiao*), and total doctrine (*yüan-chiao*).
2. Instantaneous doctrine (*tun-chiao*), gradual doctrine (*chien-chiao*), secret doctrine (*pi-mi chiao*), and explicit doctrine (*hsien-chiao*).

These classifications are developed with the aid of enumerative schemata such as the Chinese love, and the end product is a rather indigestible mixture of Sino-Indian hermeneutics. One of Chih-i's more famous phrases is "the trichiliocosm in a single thought" (*i-nien san-ch'ien*); that is, the identity of the single and the multiple, of the absolute and the empirical, such as was taught by the old Taoist dialectic; but the stress laid on thought is truly Buddhist. This phrase occurs in Chih-i's main work, which deals with the control of thought by "stopping" (*chih*, in Sanskrit *śamatha*, calming, stilling) and "scrutinizing" (*kuan*: *vipaśyanā*, inspection)—something like the *via purgativa* and *via illuminativa* of our own mystics. This work is entitled *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, *mo-ho* being used to transcribe the Sanskrit *mahā* (great); there is also a "lesser" *chih-kuan* (*Hsiao chih-kuan*). The T'ien-t'ai sect hardly survives in China today, but it has been continued and developed in Japan, though in rather modified forms.

POSTSCRIPT TO CHAPTER 16

The survey of developments in Chinese philosophy and religion between Han and T'ang contained in this chapter constitutes one of the last major publications of Paul Demiéville (1894–1979) in a career that stretched from the days of Chavannes and Pelliot to the more recent efflorescence in Paris of the study of Chinese religion. The breadth of learning revealed here is typical of Demiéville's scholarship, and though written in the early 1970s, this chapter still stands as a masterly summary of the intellectual history of the period ten years later.

Inevitably, however, our understanding of certain aspects of the topics treated in this chapter has changed in the course of time. Remarkably, Demiéville's treatment of the development of Chinese Buddhism and its relations with the Chinese philosophical tradition (a subject on which he was an acknowledged authority) does not warrant any major qualification, although it is clear that new areas of research are being opened up that may one day give us a picture of how Buddhism was understood not only by the few who possessed philosophical inclinations, but also by the many who cared little for doctrinal subtlety.[1] In the case of Taoism some futher comment on his remarks is already necessary.

One of the principal concomitants of the rapid advances that are now being made in our understanding of Taoism has been an increased self-consciousness about the application of the label Taoist. In the early 1980s scholars are much more chary of dealing out this label than hitherto, especially since it has been recognized that historically the Chinese, though not always as precise in their terminology as one might wish, had a much more clearly focused conception of who was a Taoist and who was not than many modern Western sinologists. In particular, the period covered by Demiéville witnessed the reinterpretation of the ancient texts which under Han had been classified under the heading of Taoism (*Tao-chia*). Since this reinterpretation (described above as "the philosophical revival of the third

1 This new trend has been described by Eric Zürcher in "Perspectives in the study of Chinese Buddhism," *JRAS*, 1982:2, 161–76.

century") marked a complete break with, and even reversal of, earlier understanding of the texts in some circles, at the same time that other commentators continued to adhere to Han practice, it is hard to see them during this period as the property of any one intellectual tradition. Rather, it was open to any thinker, whatever his philosophical leanings, to make whatever use of them he saw fit – even, in the most extreme case, to convert their ancient meaning to yield a Buddhist message.

At the same time as reference to these writings had thus quite obviously ceased to be (if indeed it ever was) a touchstone of adherence to any school or even tendency meriting the epithet Taoist, developments were taking place in Chinese religion that led eventually to the emergence of a religious tradition which explicitly claimed for itself the name of Taoism. This is the tradition referred to by Demiéville as the Taoist Church. Though this corresponded only very loosely to Western notions of a church, its adherents did possess a degree of doctrinal uniformity and institutional distinctness that (as Demiéville makes clear) won the recognition of Chinese dynasties in both north and south. So whatever the relationship of the Taoist religion of the Six Dynasties to anything that had gone before, the tendency of recent scholarship to confine the use of the word "Taoism" to this tradition only does reflect an increased awareness of the way in which Chinese of this petiod understood the meaning of the term.

Yet the process by which the Taoist religion came into existence as a distinct tradition was by no means simple. Demiéville here can only affirm that the Taoist Church grew out of what he describes as "popular Taoism at the end of Han." We now know much more about some stages of that process; about others we are little better informed than we were ten years ago.

Much has been written in Chinese and Japanese on the Yellow Turbans and the Five Pecks of Grain since the appearance of the studies used by Demiéville, but it has in the main proved impossible to bring new sources to bear in resolving the problems raised by these movements. Standard historical works are highly biased against them and reveal very little, while the texts that may represent the teachings of the participants in these movements are all beset to a greater or lesser extent with doubts as to their authenticity. Demiéville deals with three such texts, all of them unknown or largely ignored until this century: the *T'ai-p'ing ching*, the *Lao-tzu pien-hua ching*, and the *Hsiang-erh* commentary on the *Tao-te ching*.

Recent scholarship has had little to add to Demiéville's tentative conclusion that the surviving portions of the *T'ai-p'ing ching* reflect a version of the scripture dating to the late Six Dynasties period.[2] Although some parts

2 For a recent summary of the problems, see B. J. Mansvelt Beck, "The date of the *Taiping Jing*," *TP*, 66:4–5 (1980), 149–82.

of this version would appear to be of Han date, it has not yet proved possible to tell their extent precisely, or to determine to what particular stage in the early evolution of the text they may relate. Even were a close analysis of the text to reveal this, there is still considerable doubt as to the degree of connection between the *T'ai-p'ing ching* and the teachings of Chang Chüeh, leader of the Yellow Turbans. Indeed, recent Chinese scholarship, which has tended to ignore the bibliographical difficulties surrounding the *T'ai-p'ing ching*, has nonetheless seen vigorous controversy over this very issue, though very much within the confines of the prevailing historiographic norms. The extent to which a connection is affirmed has largely depended on the extent to which a materialist philosophy is detected in the work.[3]

Similarly, although the arguments advanced against dating the *Lao-tzu pien-hua ching* to the Han dynasty are not compelling enough to have swayed academic opinion against the dating implied by Demiéville, his statement that his book "must have originated with the rebels in the west" may be seen as misleading if taken to suggest that it was a product of the Five Pecks of Grain cult.[4] In fact, the monograph to which he refers for a study of this scripture, though situating its origin in west China, specifically argues against any connection with the Five Pecks of Grain; rather, it would appear to be the product of a rival sect.[5] The link between the *Hsiang-erh* commentary and the Five Pecks of Grain is, to be sure, indubitable. It is only Demiéville's phrase "generally attributed ro Chang Lu" (see p. 816 above) which gives due warning of a controversy as yet unresolved. Since early bibliographical evidence for this commentary is missing,[6] there is certainly room for doubt as to the accuracy of its attribution. Yet to argue that it cannot be from the hand of Chang Lu because it fulminates against doctrines unknown to him is a less easy matter. One of the doctrines concerned may be detected in the *Lao-tzu pien-hua ching*; others can be traced back to rhe late Han also.[7]

Some advances have been made by setting these problematic texts to one side and concentrating on a close analysis of Yellow Turban doctrines as they appear in the historical record. Thus in the mid-1970s Fukui Shigemasa published a series of articles that took the Yellow Turban slogan "the

3 Thus the *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh nien-chien*, 1982 (Shanghai, 1982), p. 123.

4 For these arguments, see Kusuyama Haruki, *Rōshi densetsu no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1979), pp. 328–31; and p. 819 above.

5 Anna Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu dans le taoïsme des Han* (Paris, 1969), pp. 69 note 3, 74.

6 See T. H. Barrett, "Taoist and Buddhist mysteries in the interpretation of the *Tao-te ching*," *JRAS*, 1982.1, 37.

7 Seidel, *Divinisation*, pp. 78–79; and Yoshioka Yoshitoyo, *Dōkyō to Bukkyō*, Vol. III (Tokyo, 1976), pp. 332–34, 349–50.

Blue Heaven is already dead, the Yellow Heaven is about to be established" and showed it to be a religious rather than a political message. He demonstrated that the organization of the Yellow Turbans reflected the religious utopianism noted by Demiéville and related all this to local traditions in eastern China.[8] In 1978 archeological reports from China showed that the imminent demise of the Blue Heaven was something fervently hoped for by the laborers building sumptuous tombs for Ts'ao Ts'ao's family in Anhui in A.D. 170.[9] Although this disproved Fukui's specific contention that the phrase "Blue Heaven" signified little in opposition to the more religiously loaded term "Yellow Heaven," it does confirm his picture of a populace expecting the arrival of a new dispensation conceived in supramundane terms and perhaps over a broader area than he had suggested.

Recent Chinese writings on the Yellow Turbans have for the most part preferred to emphasize the social and political background to the uprising of 184,[10] though in doing so they have brought back into prominence one aspect of late Han noted by earlier Japanese research but not treated either by Demiéville or by recent Japanese surveys of the uprisings of the period.[11] This is the prevalence of epidemics, especially in the decade or so prior to 184, which goes far to explain the emphasis on healing both among the Yellow Turbans and the Way of the Five Pecks of Grain.[12]

It is to be hoped that current research into the Taoist canon will, if it does not uncover texts associated with the latter movement that actually date back to Han, at least throw some light on the way in which, as the sect of the Celestial Masters, it developed out of the organization established by Chang Lu. Certainly the past decade has shown how the Taoist canon can be used to amplify the history of Taoism in southern China,

8 Fukui Shigemasa (Jūga), "Kōkin no ran no kigi to kōgō," *Taishō daigaku kenkyū kiyō*, 59 (1973), 67–86; "Kōkin shūdan no soshiki to sono seikaku," *Shikan*, 89 (1974), 18–32; and "Kōkin no ran to dentō no mondai," *TSK*, 34:1 (1975), 24–57.

9 See An-hui sheng Po-hsien po-wu-kuan, "Po-hsien Ts'ao Ts'ao tsung-tsu mu-tsang," *WW*, 1978.8, 32–45 (reproduction of inscription on last page); and T'ien Ch'ang-wu, "Tu Ts'ao Ts'ao tsung-tsu mu chuan-k'o tz'u," *WW*, 1978.8, 46–50.

10 See, e.g., *Chung-kuo li-shih-hsüeh nien-chien 1981, chien-pen* (Peking, 1981), pp. 233–34, for a typical recent year of productive work on this subject. Apart from controversies over the *T'ai-p'ing ching* mentioned above, the role of Chang Lu in Szechwan has also been much discussed. In both cases these polemics are simply continuations of earlier disagreements: see Matsuzaki Tsuneko, "Go-Kan matsu no shūkyōteki nōmin hanran," *Sundai shigaku*, 29 (1971), 92 note 13 and 99–100. This review article is a convenient summary of Chinese and Japanese research as it stood at the time of the original writing of this chapter.

11 See Akizuki Kan'ei, "Kōkin no ran no shūkyōsei," *TSK*, 15:1 (1956), 43–56; and, the otherwise extremely thorough Kimura Masao, "Kōkin no ran," *Tōkyō kyōiku daigaku bungakubu kiyō*, 91 (1973), 1–54.

12 For example, Wei Ch'i-p'eng, "T'ai-p'ing ching yü Tung-Han i-hsüeh," *Shih-chieh tsung-chiao yen-chiu*, 3 (1981), 101–09; Chao K'o-yao and Hsü Tao-hsün, "Lun Huang-chin ch'i-i yü tsung-chiao ti kuan-hsi," *Chung-kuo-shih yen-chiu*, 1 (1980), 45–56.

which in Demiéville's narrative is subsumed under accounts of its three leading figures, Ko Hung, Lu Hsiu-ching, and T'ao Hung-ching. For although all three of these men were southerners, aristocrats, and scholars, a close reading of materials in the canon has shown that the position of Ko Hung in the history of Taoism is very different from that of Lu or T'ao.

Ko may be seen as the last known representative of southern, conservative intellectual traditions looking back to Han (and especially, in Ko's case, to the esoteric lore surrounding the pursuit of immortality), which stood in sharp contrast to the new philosophical sophistication of northerners like Wang Pi. He does not, however, appear to have been a member of any organized religious group, let alone a priest or hierarch, but far more to have been a bookish enthusiast and propagandist rather than a true master of the arcana he promoted.[13] Lu Hsiu-ching and T'ao Hung-ching, on the other hand, were both priests in the Taoist schools that arose in southern China in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, and commanded an initiate's knowledge of the scriptural traditions they represented.

In fact the *Chen-kao* of T'ao Hung-ching, though described by Demiéville (see p. 866 above) as a "new encyclopedia of contemporary Taoism," has been shown to consist of documents dating back to the fourth century that provide a detailed picture of the origins of the southern Shang-ch'ing sect in particular. From this it is possible to discern that the transfer of the Chin regime to south China led to an extension into that area of the influence of the religion of the Celestial Masters. In time the encounter of this outside religious force with the native occult traditions represented by Ko Hung provoked a revelation to the dispossessed southern aristocracy of hitherto unknown divinities, far higher in rank than those of the northerners. Yang Hsi (A.D. 330–?), the medium through whom these new scriptures were transmitted to the world in divinely inspired calligraphy, achieved such success that much of the effort of Lu Hsiu-ching and T'ao Hung-ching was directed to sorting out the authentic pronouncements of these gods from a number of later imitations. Although the exact origins of the Ling-pao scriptures are not at the moment quite as clear as those of the Shang-ch'ing sect, it is known that they represent a second wave of revelations at a somewhat later date, so that Yang Hsi's experience also served as a model for these doctrinally rather distinct texts. Fortunately, this major turning point in Chinese religious history may easily be added to

13 See Nathan Sivin, "On the word 'Taoist' as a source of perplexity. With special reference to the relations of science and religion in traditional China," *History of Religions*, 17:3–4 (1978), 323–27. This article also treats the problem of defining Taoism as discussed above.

Demiéville's account by reading the recent monograph on the emergence of the Shang-ch'ing tradition by Michel Strickmann.[14]

No doubt another decade of work will clarify further the development of Taoism during the fifth and sixth centuries, and no doubt one day it will be possible to write a survey of the period covered by this chapter in which not only Buddhism and Taoism, but also the relationship between the two, will be presented in the light of a more balanced knowledge of these traditions.[15] Such a gradual advance in the course of research we may reasonably expect. But rhat someone should write once more on all the topics touched upon here with but half of the unique combination of erudition, insight, and vigorous narrative style that lay at Demiéville's command is something for which we may only hope. For surely we shall not soon see his like again.

14 Michel Strickmann, *Le taoïsme du Mao Chan: Chronique d'une révélation* (Paris, 1981).

15 The latter field of research has already attracted the attention of Western sinology: see E. Zürcher, "Buddhist influence on early Taoism," *TP*, 66:1–3 (1980), 84–147. Japanese studies in Buddhism likewise manifest a steadily increasing awareness of the complex relationship between Buddhism, Taoism and popular religion, as witness the latest multivolume survey of Chinese Buddhist history, which covers some of the same ground as this chapter: Kamata Shigeo, *Chūgoku Bukkyō*, Vol. II (Tokyo, 1983), pp. 74–75.

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